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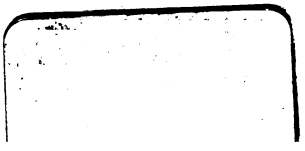

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THE DUKE'S CHILDREN

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THE DUKE'S CHILDREN

BY

ANTHONY TROLLOPE

VOL. III

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THE DUKE'S CHILDREN.

CHAPTER I.

"I DON'T THINK SHE IS A SNAKE."

On the following day, Tuesday, the Boncassens went, and then there were none of the guests left but Mrs. Finn and Lady Mabel Grex,—with of course Miss Cassewary. The Duke had especially asked both Mrs. Finn and Lady Mabel to remain,—the former, through his anxiety to show his repentance for the injustice he had formerly done her, and the latter in the hope that something might be settled as soon as the crowd of visitors should have gone. He had never spoken quite distinctly to Mabel. He had felt that the manner in which he had learned his son's purpose,—that which once had been his son's purpose,—forbade him to do so. But he had so spoken as to make Lady Mabel quite aware of his wish. He would not have told her how sure he was that Silverbridge would keep no more race-horses, how he trusted that Silverbridge had done with betting, how he believed that the young member would take a real interest in the House of Commons, had he not intended that she should take a special interest in the young man. And then he had

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spoken about the house in London. It was to be made over to Silverbridge as soon as Silverbridge should marry. And there was Gatherum Castle. Gatherum was rather a trouble than otherwise. He had ever felt it to be so, but had nevertheless always kept it open perhaps for a month in the year. His uncle had always resided there for a fortnight at Christmas. When Silverbridge was married it would become the young man's duty to do something of the same kind. Gatherum was the white elephant of the family, and Silverbridge must enter in upon his share of the trouble. He did not know that in saying all this he was offering his son as a husband to Lady Mabel, but she understood it as thoroughly as though he had spoken the words.

But she knew the son's mind also. He had indeed himself told her all his mind. "Of course I love her best of all," he had said. When he told her of it she had been so overcome that she had wept in her despair;—had wept in his presence. She had declared to him her secret,—that it had been her intention to become his wife, and then he had rejected her! It had all been shame and sorrow and disappointment to her. And she could not but remember that there had been a moment when she might have secured him by a word. A look would have done it; a touch of her finger on that morning. She had known then that he had intended to be in earnest,—that he only waited for encouragement. She had not given it because she had not wished to grasp too eagerly at the prize,—and now the prize was gone! She had said that she had spared him;—but then she could afford to joke, thinking that he would surely come back to her.

She had begun her world with so fatal a mistake!

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When she was quite young, when she was little more than a child but still not a child, she had given all her love to a man whom she soon found that it would be impossible she should ever marry. He had offered to face the world with her, promising to do the best to smooth the rough places, and to soften the hard stones for her feet. But she, young as she was, had felt that both he and she belonged to a class which could hardly endure poverty with contentment. The grinding need for money, the absolute necessity of luxurious living, had been pressed upon her from her childhood. She had seen it and acknowledged it, and had told him with precocious wisdom that that which he offered to do for her sake would be a folly for them both. She had not stinted the assurance of her love, but had told him that they must both turn aside and learn to love elsewhere. He had done so, with too complete a readiness! She had dreamed of a second love, which should obliterate the first,—which might still leave to her the memory of the romance of her early passion. Then this boy had come in her way! With him all her ambition might have been satisfied. She desired high rank and great wealth. With him she might have had it all. And then, too, though there would always be the memory of that early passion, yet she could in another fashion love this youth. He was pleasant to her, and gracious;—and she had told herself that if it should be so that this great fortune might be hers, she would atone to him fully for that past romance by the wifelike devotion of her life. The cup had come within the reach of her fingers, but she had not grasped it. Her happiness, her triumphs, her great success had been there, present to her, and she had dallied with

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her fortune. There had been a day on which he had been all but at her feet, and on the next he had been prostrate at the feet of another. He had even dared to tell her so,—saying of that American that "of course he loved her the best!"

Over and over again since that she had asked herself whether there was no chance. Though he had loved that other one best she would take him if it were possible. When the invitation came from the Duke she would not lose a chance. She had told him that it was impossible that he, the heir to the Duke of Omnium, should marry an American. All his family, all his friends, all his world would be against him. And then he was so young,—and, as she thought, so easily led. He was lovable and prone to love;—but surely his love could not be very strong, or he would not have changed so easily.

She did not hesitate to own to herself that this American was very lovely. She too, herself, was beautiful. She too had a reputation for grace, loveliness, and feminine high-bred charm. She knew all that, but she knew also that her attractions were not so bright as those of her rival. She could not smile or laugh and throw sparks of brilliance around her as did the American girl. Miss Boncassen could be graceful as a nymph in doing the awkwardest thing! When she had pretended to walk stiffly along to some imaginary marriage ceremony, with her foot stuck out before her, with her chin in the air, and one arm akimbo, Silverbridge had been all afire with admiration. Lady Mabel understood it all. The American girl must be taken away,—from out of the reach of the young man's senses,—and then the struggle must be made.

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Lady Mabel had not been long at Matching before she learned that she had much in her favour. She perceived that the Duke himself had no suspicion of what was going on, and that he was strongly disposed in her favour. She unravelled it all in her own mind. There must have been some agreement, between the father and the son, when the son had all but made his offer to her. More than once she was half-minded to speak openly to the Duke, to tell him all that Silverbridge had said to her and all that he had not said, and to ask the father's help in scheming against that rival. But she could not find the words with which to begin. And then might he not despise her, and despising her reject her, were she to declare her desire to marry a man who had given his heart to another woman? And so, when the Duke asked her to remain after the departure of the other guests, she decided that it would be best to bide her time. The Duke, as she assented, kissed her hand, and she knew that this sign of grace was given to his intended daughter-in-law.

In all this she half confided her thoughts and her prospects to her old friend, Miss Cassewary. "That girl has gone at last," she said to Miss Cass.

"I fear she has left her spells behind her, my dear."

"Of course she has. The venom out of the snake's tooth will poison all the blood; but still the poor bitten wretch does not always die."

"I don't think she is a snake."

"Don't be moral, Cass. She is a snake in my sense. She has got her weapons, and of course it is natural enough that she should use them. If I want to be Duchess of Omnium, why should n't she?"

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"I hate to hear you talk of yourself in that way."

"Because you have enough of the old school about you to like conventional falsehood. This young man did in fact ask me to be his wife. Of course I meant to accept him,—but I did n't. Then comes this convict's granddaughter."

"Not a convict's!"

"You know what I mean. Had he been a convict it would have been all the same. I take upon myself to say that, had the world been informed that an alliance had been arranged between the eldest son of the Duke of Omnium and the daughter of Earl Grex,—the world would have been satisfied. Every unmarried daughter of every peer in England would have envied me,—but it would have been comme il faut."

"Certainly, my dear."

"But what would be the feeling as to the convict's granddaughter?"

"You don't suppose that I would approve it;—but it seems to me that in these days young men do just what they please."

"He shall do what he pleases, but he must be made to be pleased with me." So much she said to Miss Cassewary; but she did not divulge any plan. The Boncassens had just gone off to the station, and Silverbridge was out shooting. If anything could be done here at Matching, it must be done quickly, as Silverbridge would soon take his departure. She did not know it, but in truth he was remaining in order that he might, as he said, "have all this out with the governor."

She tried to realise for herself some plan, but when the evening came nothing was fixed. For a quarter

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of an hour, just as the sun was setting, the Duke joined her in the gardens,—and spoke to her more plainly than he had ever spoken before. "Has Silverbridge come home?" he asked.

"I have not seen him."

"I hope you and Mary get on well together."

"I think so, Duke. I am sure we should if we saw more of each other."

"I sincerely hope you may. There is nothing I wish for Mary so much as that she should have a sister. And there is no one whom I would be so glad to hear her call by that name as yourself." How could he have spoken plainer?

The ladies were all together in the drawing-room when Silverbridge came bursting in rather late. "Where 's the governor?" he asked, turning to his sister.

"Dressing, I should think; but what is the matter?"

"I want to see him. I must be off to Cornwall to-morrow morning."

"To Cornwall!" said Miss Cassewary. "Why to Cornwall?" asked Lady Mabel. But Mary, connecting Cornwall with Frank Tregear, held her peace.

"I can't explain it all now, but I must start very early to-morrow." Then he went off to his father's study, and finding the Duke still there explained the cause of his intended journey. The member for Polpenno had died, and Frank Tregear had been invited to stand for the borough. He had written to his friend to ask him to come and assist in the struggle. "Years ago there used to be always a Tregear in for Polpenno," said Silverbridge.

"But he is a younger son."

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"I don't know anything about it," said Silverbridge, "but as he has asked me to go I think I ought to do it." The Duke, who was by no means the man to make light of the political obligations of friendship, raised no objection.

"I wish," said he, "that something could have been arranged between you and Mabel before you went." The young man stood in the gloom of the dark room aghast. This was certainly not the moment for explaining everything to his father. "I have set my heart very much upon it, and you ought to be gratified by knowing that I quite approve your choice."

All that had been years ago,—in last June;—before Mrs. Montacute Jones's garden-party, before that day in the rain at Maidenhead, before the brightness of Killancodlem, before the glories of Miss Boncassen had been revealed to him. "There is no time for that kind of thing now," he said weakly.

"I thought that when you were here together,——"

"I must dress now, sir; but I will tell you all about it when I get back from Cornwall. I will come back direct to Matching, and will explain everything." So he escaped.

It was clear to Lady Mabel that there was no opportunity now for any scheme. Whatever might be possible must be postponed till after this Cornish business had been completed. Perhaps it might be better so. She had thought that she would appeal to himself, that she would tell him of his father's wishes, of her love for him,—of the authority which he had once given her for loving him,—and of the absolute impossibility of his marriage with the American. She thought that she could do it, if not efficiently at any rate effect-

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ively. But it could not be done on the very day on which the American had gone.

It came out in the course of the evening that he was going to assist Frank Tregear in his canvass. The matter was not spoken of openly, as Tregear's name could hardly be mentioned. But everybody knew it, and it gave occasion to Mabel for a few words apart with Silverbridge. "I am so glad you are going to him," she said in a little whisper.

"Of course I go when he wishes me. I don't know that I can do him any good."

"The greatest good in the world. Your name will go so far! It will be everything to him to be in Parliament. And when are we to meet again?" she said.

"I shall turn up somewhere," he replied as he gave her his hand to wish her good-bye.

On the following morning the Duke proposed to Lady Mabel that she should stay at Matching for yet another fortnight,—or even for a month if it might be possible. Lady Mabel, whose father was still abroad, was not sorry to accept the invitation.

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CHAPTER II.

POLPENNO.

POLWENNING, the seat of Mr. Tregear, Frank's father, was close to the borough of Polpenno,—so close that the gates of the grounds opened into the town. As Silverbridge had told his father, many of the Tregear family had sat for the borough. Then there had come changes, and strangers had made themselves welcome by their money. When the vacancy now occurred a deputation waited upon Squire Tregear and asked him to stand. The deputation would guarantee that the expense should not exceed —a certain limited sum. Mr. Tregear for himself had no such ambition. His eldest son was abroad and was not at all such a man as one would choose to make into a member of Parliament. After much consideration in the family, Frank was invited to present himself to the constituency. Frank's aspirations in regard to Lady Mary Palliser were known at Polwenning, and it was thought that they would have a better chance of success if he could write the letters M.P. after his name. Frank acceded, and as he was starting wrote to ask the assistance of his friend Lord Silverbridge. At that time there were only nine days more before the election, and Mr. Carbottle, the liberal candidate, was already living in great style at the Camborne Arms.

Mr. and Mrs. Tregear and an elder sister of Frank's,

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who quite acknowledged herself to be an old maid, were very glad to welcome Frank's friend. On the first morning of course they discussed the candidates' prospects. "My best chance of success," said Frank, "arises from the fact that Mr. Carbottle is fatter than the people here seem to approve."

"If his purse be fat," said old Mr. Tregear, "that will carry off any personal defect." Lord Silverbridge asked whether the candidate was too fat to make speeches. Miss Tregear declared that he had made three speeches daily for the last week, and that Mr. Williams, the rector, who had heard him, declared him to be a godless dissenter. Mrs. Tregear thought that it would be much better that the place should be disfranchised altogether than that such a horrid man should be brought into the neighbourhood. "A godless dissenter!" she said, holding up her hands in dismay. Frank thought that they had better abstain from allusion to their opponent's religion. Then Mr. Tregear made a little speech. "We used," he said, "to endeavour to get some one to represent us in Parliament who would agree with us on vital subjects, such as the Church of England and the necessity of religion. Now it seems to be considered ill-mannered to make any allusion to such subjects!" From which it may be seen that this old Tregear was very conservative indeed.

When the old people were gone to bed the two young men discussed the matter. "I hope you 'll get in," said Silverbridge. "And if I can do anything for you of course I will."

"It is always good to have a real member along with one," said Tregear.

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"But I begin to think that I am a very shaky conservative myself."

"I am sorry for that."

"Sir Timothy is such a beast," said Silverbridge.

"Is that your notion of a political opinion? Are you to be this or that in accordance with your own liking or disliking for some particular man? One is supposed to have opinions of one's own."

"Your father would be down on a man because he is a dissenter."

"Of course my father is old-fashioned."

"It does seem so hard to me," said Silverbridge, "to find any difference between the two sets. You, who are a true conservative, are much more like to my father, who is a liberal, than to your own, who is on the same side as yourself."

"It may be so, and still I may be a good conservative."

"It seems to me in the House to mean nothing more than choosing one set of companions or choosing another. There are some awful cads who sit along with Mr. Monk;—fellows that make you sick to hear them, and whom I could n't be civil to. But I don't think there is anybody I hate so much as old Beeswax. He has a contemptuous way with his nose which makes me long to pull it."

"And you mean to go over in order that you may be justified in doing so. I think I soar a little higher," said Tregear.

"Oh, of course. You 're a clever fellow," said Silverbridge, not without a touch of sarcasm.

"A man may soar higher than that without being very clever. If the party that calls itself liberal were

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to have all its own way who is there that does n't believe that the Church would go at once, then all distinction between boroughs, the House of Lords immediately afterwards, and after that the Crown."

"Those are not my governor's ideas."

"Your governor could n't help himself. A liberal party, with plenipotentiary power, must go on right away to the logical conclusion of its arguments. It is only the conservative feeling of the country which saves such men as your father from being carried headlong to ruin by their own machinery. You have read Carlyle's French Revolution."

"Yes, I have read that."

"Was n't it so there? There were a lot of honest men who thought they could do a deal of good by making everybody equal. A good many were made equal by having their heads cut off. That 's why I mean to be member for Polpenno and to send Mr. Carbottle back to London. Carbottle probably does n't want to cut anybody's head off."

"I dare say he 's as conservative as anybody."

"But he wants to be a member of Parliament; and, as he has n't thought much about anything, he is quite willing to lend a hand to communism, radicalism, socialism, chopping people's heads off, or anything else."

"That 's all very well," said Silverbridge, "but where should we have been if there had been no liberals? Robespierre and his pals cut off a lot of heads, but Louis XIV. and Louis XV. locked up more in prison." And so he had the last word in the argument.

The whole of the next morning was spent in canvassing, and the whole of the afternoon. In the

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evening there was a great meeting at the Polwenning Assembly Room, which at the present moment was in the hands of the conservative party. Here Frank Tregear made an oration, in which he declared his political convictions. The whole speech was said at the time to be very good; but the portion of it which was apparently esteemed the most had direct reference to Mr. Carbottle. Who was Mr. Carbottle? Why had he come to Polpenno? Who had sent for him? Why Mr. Carbottle rather than anybody else? Did not the people of Polpenno think that it might be as well to send Mr. Carbottle back to the place from whence he had come? These questions, which seemed to Silverbridge to be as easy as they were attractive, almost made him desirous of making a speech himself.

Then Mr. Williams, the rector, followed, a gentleman who had many staunch friends and many bitter enemies in the town. He addressed himself chiefly to that bane of the whole country—as he conceived them,—the godless dissenters; and was felt by Tregear to be injuring the cause by every word he spoke. It was necessary that Mr. Williams should liberate his own mind, and therefore he persevered with the godless dissenters at great length,—not explaining, however, how a man who thought enough about his religion to be a dissenter could be godless, or how a godless man should care enough about religion to be a dissenter.

Mr. Williams was heard with impatience, and then there was a clamour for the young lord. He was the son of an ex-Prime Minister, and therefore of course he could speak. He was himself a member of Parliament, and therefore could speak. He had boldly

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severed himself from the faulty political tenets of his family, and therefore on such an occasion as this was peculiarly entitled to speak. When a man goes electioneering he must speak. At a dinner-table to refuse is possible;—or in any assembly convened for a semi-private purpose, a gentleman may declare that he is not prepared for the occasion. But in such an emergency as this, a man,—and a member of Parliament,—cannot plead that he is not prepared. A son of a former Prime Minister who had already taken so strong a part in politics as to have severed himself from his father, not prepared to address the voters of a borough whom he had come to canvass! The plea was so absurd that he was thrust on to his feet before he knew what he was about.

It was in truth his first public speech. At Silverbridge he had attempted to repeat a few words, and in his failure had been covered by the Sprugeons and the Sprouts. But now he was on his legs in a great room, in an unknown town, with all the aristocracy of the place before him! His eyes at first swam a little, and there was a moment in which he thought he would run away. But, on that morning, as he was dressing, there had come to his mind the idea of the possibility of such a moment as this, and a few words had occurred to him. "My friend Frank Tregear," he began, rushing at once at his subject, "is a very good fellow, and I hope you 'll elect him." Then he paused, not remembering what was to come next; but the sentiment which he had uttered appeared to his auditors to be so good in itself and so well delivered, that they filled up a long pause with continued clappings and exclamations. "Yes," continued the young member

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of Parliament, encouraged by the kindness of the crowd, "I have known Frank Tregear ever so long, and I don't think you could find a better member of Parliament anywhere." There were many ladies present and they thought that the Duke's son was just the person who ought to come electioneering among them. His voice was much pleasanter to their ears than that of old Mr. Williams. The women waved their handkerchiefs and the men stamped their feet. Here was an orator come among them! "You all know all about it just as well as I do," continued the orator, "and I am sure you feel that he ought to be member for Polpenno." There could be no doubt about that as far as the opinion of the audience went. "There can't be a better fellow than Frank Tregear, and I ask you all to give three cheers for the new member." Ten times three cheers were given, and the Carbottleites outside the door who had come to report what was going on at the Tregear meeting were quite of opinion that this eldest son of the former Prime Minister was a tower of strength. "I don't know anything about Mr. Carbottle," continued Silverbridge, who was almost growing to like the sound of his own voice. "Perhaps he 's a good fellow too." "No, no, no! A very bad fellow indeed," was heard from different parts of the room. "I don't know anything about him. I was n't at school with Carbottle." This was taken as a stroke of the keenest wit, and was received with infinite cheering. Silverbridge was in the pride of his youth, and Carbottle was sixty at the least. Nothing could have been funnier. "He seems to be a stout old party, but I don't think he 's the man for Polpenno. I think you 'll return Frank Tregear. I

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was at school with him;—and I tell you that you can't find a better fellow anywhere than Frank Tregear." Then he sat down, and I am afraid he felt that he had made the speech of the evening. "We are so much obliged to you, Lord Silverbridge," Miss Tregear said as they were walking home together. "That 's just the sort of thing that the people like. So reassuring, you know. What Mr. Williams says about the dissenters is of course true; but it is n't reassuring."

"I hope I did n't make a fool of myself to-night," Silverbridge said when he was alone with Tregear,—probably with some little pride in his heart.

"I ought to say that you did, seeing that you praised me so violently. But, whatever it was, it was well taken. I don't know whether they will elect me; but had you come down as a candidate, I am quite sure they would have elected you." Silverbridge was hardly satisfied with this. He wished to have been told that he had spoken well. He did not, however, resent his friend's coldness. "Perhaps, after all, I did make a fool of myself," he said to himself as he went to bed.

On the next day, after breakfast, it was found to be raining heavily. Canvassing was of course the business of the hour, and canvassing is a business which cannot be done indoors. It was soon decided that the rain should go for nothing. Could an agreement have been come to with the Carbottleites it might have been decided that both parties should abstain, but as that was impossible the Tregear party could not afford to lose the day. As Mr. Carbottle, by reason of his fatness and natural slowness, would perhaps be specially averse to walking about in the slush and mud, it might be that they would gain something; so after breakfast

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they started with umbrellas,—Tregear, Silverbridge, Mr. Newcomb the curate, Mr. Pinebott the conservative attorney, with four or five followers who were armed with books and pencils, and who ticked off on the lists of the voters the names of the friendly, the doubtful, and the inimical.

Parliamentary canvassing is not a pleasant occupation. Perhaps nothing more disagreeable, more squalid, more revolting to the senses, more opposed to personal dignity, can be conceived. The same words have to be repeated over and over again in the cottages, hovels, and lodgings of poor men and women who only understand that the time has come round in which they are to be flattered instead of being the flatterers. "I think I am right in supposing that your husband's principles are conservative, Mrs. Bubbs." "I don't know nothing about it. You 'd better call again and see Bubbs hissel." "Certainly, I will do so. I should n't at all like to leave the borough without seeing Mr. Bubbs. I hope we shall have your influence, Mrs. Bubbs." "I don't know nothing about it. My folk at home allays vote buff; and I think Bubbs ought to go buff too. Only mind this; Bubbs don't never come home to his dinner. You must come arter six, and I hope he 's to have some'at for his trouble. He won't have my word to vote unless he have some'at." Such is the conversation in which the candidate takes a part, while his cortége at the door is criticising his very imperfect mode of securing Mrs. Bubbs's good wishes. Then he goes on to the next house, and the same thing with some variation is endured again. Some guide, philosopher, and friend who accompanies him, and who is the chief of the cortége, has calculated on his behalf that

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he ought to make twenty such visitations an hour, and to call on two hundred constituents in the course of the day. As he is always falling behind in his number he is always being driven on by his philosopher, till he comes to hate the poor creatures to whom he is forced to address himself with a most cordial hatred.

It is a nuisance to which no man should subject himself in any weather. But when it rains there is superadded a squalor and an ill humour to all the party which makes it almost impossible for them not to quarrel before the day is over. To talk politics to Mrs. Bubbs under any circumstances is bad, but to do so with the conviction that the moisture is penetrating from your greatcoat through your shirt to your bones, and that while so employed you are breathing the steam from those seven other wet men at the door, is abominable. To have to go through this is enough to take away all the pride which a man might otherwise take from becoming a member of Parliament. But to go through it and then not to become a member is base indeed! To go through it and to feel that you are probably paying at the rate of a hundred pounds a day for the privilege is most disheartening. Silverbridge as he backed up Tregear in the uncomfortable work congratulated himself on the comfort of having a Mr. Sprugeon and a Mr. Sprout who could manage his borough for him without a contest.

They worked on that day all the morning till one, when they took luncheon, all reeking with wet, at the King's Head,—so that a little money might be legitimately spent in the cause. Then, at two, they sallied out again, vainly endeavouring to make their twenty calls within the hour. About four, when it was begin-

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ning to be dusk, they were very tired, and Silverbridge had ventured to suggest that as they were all wet through, and as there was to be another meeting in the Assembly Room that night, and as nobody in that part of the town seemed to be at home, they might perhaps be allowed to adjourn for the present. He was thinking how nice it would be to have a glass of hot brandy and water and then lounge till dinner-time. But the philosophers received the proposition with stern disdain. Was his lordship aware that Mr. Carbottle had been out all day from eight in the morning, and was still at work; that the Carbottleites had already sent for lanterns and were determined to go on till eight o'clock among the artisans who would then have returned from their work? When a man had put his hand to the plough, the philosophers thought that that man should complete the furrow!

The philosophers' view had just carried the day, the discussion having been held under seven or eight wet umbrellas at the corner of a dirty little lane leading into the High Street; when suddenly, on the other side of the way, Mr. Carbottle's cortége made its appearance. The philosophers at once informed them that on such occasions it was customary that the rival candidates should be introduced. "It will take ten minutes," said the philosophers; "but then it will take them ten minutes too." Upon this Tregear, as being the younger of the two, crossed over the road, and the introduction was made.

There was something comfortable in it to the Tregear party, as no imagination could conceive anything more wretched than the appearance of Mr. Carbottle. He was a very stout man of sixty, and seemed to be

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almost carried along by his companions. He had pulled his coat-collar up and his hat down till very little of his face was visible, and in attempting to look at Tregear and Silverbridge he had to lift up his chin till the rain ran off his hat on to his nose. He had an umbrella in one hand and a stick in the other, and was wet through to his very skin. What were his own feelings cannot be told, but his philosophers, guides, and friends would allow him no rest. "Very hard work, Mr. Tregear," he said, shaking his head.

"Very hard indeed, Mr. Carbottle." Then the two parties went on, each their own way, without another word.

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CHAPTER III.

THE NEWS IS SENT TO MATCHING.

THERE were nine days of this work, during which Lord Silverbridge became very popular, and made many speeches. Tregear did not win half so many hearts, or recommend himself so thoroughly to the political predilections of the borough;—but nevertheless he was returned. It would probably be unjust to attribute this success chiefly to the young lord's eloquence. It certainly was not due to the strong religious feelings of the rector. It is to be feared that even the thoughtful political convictions of the candidate did not altogether produce the result. It was that chief man among the candidates, guides, and friends, that leading philosopher who would not allow anybody to go home from the rain, and who kept his eyes so sharply open to the pecuniary doings of the Carbottleites that Mr. Carbottle's guides and friends had hardly dared to spend a shilling;—it was he who had in truth been efficacious. In every attempt they had made to spend their money they had been looked into and circumvented. As Mr. Carbottle had been brought down to Polpenno on purpose that he might spend money,—as he had nothing but his money to recommend him, and as he had not spent it,—the free and independent electors of the borough had not seen their way to vote for him. Therefore the conservatives were very elate

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with their triumph. There was a great conservative reaction. But the electioneering guide, philosopher, and friend, in the humble retirement of his own home, —he was a tailor in the town, whose assistance at such periods had long been in requisition,—he knew very well how the seat had been secured. Ten shillings a head would have sent three hundred true liberals to the ballot-box! The mode of distributing the money had been arranged; but the conservative tailor had been too acute, and not half-a-sovereign could be passed. The tailor got twenty-five pounds for his work, and that was smuggled in among the bills for printing.

Mr. Williams, however, was sure that he had so opened out the iniquities of the dissenters as to have convinced the borough. Yes; every Salem and Zion and Ebenezer in his large parish would be closed. "It is a great thing for the country," said Mr. Williams.

"He 'll make a capital member," said Silverbridge, clapping his friend on the back.

"I hope he 'll never forget," said Mr. Williams, "that he owes his seat to the Protestant and Church-of-England principles which have sunk so deeply into the minds of the thoughtful portion of the inhabitants of this borough."

"Whom should they elect but a Tregear?" said the mother, feeling that her rector took too much of the praise to himself.

"I think you have done more for us than any one else," whispered Miss Tregear to the young lord. "What you said was so reassuring!" The father before he went to bed expressed to his son, with some trepidation, a hope that all this would lead to no great permanent increase of expenditure.

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That evening before he went to bed Lord Silverbridge wrote to his father an account of what had taken place at Polpenno.

"Polwenning, 15th December.

"My dear Father,—Among us all we have managed to return Tregear. I am afraid you will not be quite pleased, because it will be a vote lost to your party. But I really think that he is just the fellow to be in Parliament. If he were on your side I 'm sure he 's the kind of man you 'd like to bring into office. He is always thinking about those sort of things. He says that if there were no conservatives such liberals as you and Mr. Monk would be destroyed by the Jacobins. There is something in that. Whether a man is a conservative or not himself, I suppose there ought to be conservatives." (The Duke as he read this made a memorandum in his own mind that he would explain to his son that every carriage should have a drag to its wheels, but that an ambitious soul would choose to be the coachman rather than the drag.)

"It was beastly work!" (The Duke made another memorandum to instruct his son that no gentleman above the age of a schoolboy should allow himself to use such a word in such a sense.) "We had to go about in the rain up to our knees in mud for eight or nine days, always saying the same thing. And of course all that we said was bosh." (Another memorandum—or rather two, one as to the slang, and another as to the expediency of teaching something to the poor voters on such occasions.) "Our only comfort was that the Carbottle people were quite as badly off as us." (Another memorandum as to the grammar. The absence of Christian charity did not at the moment

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affect the Duke.) "I made ever so many speeches, till at last it seemed to be quite easy." (Here there was a very grave memorandum. Speeches easy to young speakers are generally very difficult to old listeners.) "But of course it was all bosh." (This required no separate memorandum.)

"I have promised to go up to town with Tregear for a day or two. After that I will stick to my purpose of going to Matching again. I will be there about the 22nd, and will then stay over Christmas. After that I am going into the Brake country for some hunting. It is such a shame to have a lot of horses and never to ride them!

"Your most affectionate son,

"SILVERBRIDGE."

The last sentence gave rise in the Duke's mind to the necessity of a very elaborate memorandum on the subject of amusements generally.

By the same post another letter went from Polpenno to Matching which also gave rise to some mental memoranda. It was as follows:

"My dear Mabel,—I am a member of the British House of Commons! I have sometimes regarded myself as being one of the most peculiarly unfortunate men in the world, and yet now I have achieved that which all commoners in England think to be the greatest honour within their reach, and have done so at an age at which very few achieve it but the sons of the wealthy and the powerful.

"I now come to my misfortunes. I know that as a poor man I ought not to be a member of Parliament

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I ought to be earning my bread as a lawyer or a doctor. I have no business to be what I am, and when I am forty I shall find that I have eaten up all my good things instead of having them to eat.

"I have one chance before me. You know very well what that is. Tell her that my pride in being a member of Parliament is much more on her behalf than on my own. The man who dares to love her ought at any rate to be something in the world. If it might be,—if ever it may be,—I should wish to be something for her sake. I am sure you will be glad of my success yourself, for my own sake.

"Your affectionate friend and cousin,

"FRANCIS TREGEAR."

The first mental memorandum in regard to this came from the writer's assertion that he at forty would have eaten up all his good things. No! He, being a man, might make his way to good things though he was not born to them. He surely would win his good things for himself. But what good things were in store for her? What chance of success was there for her? But the reflection which was the most bitter to her of all came from her assurance that his love for that other girl was so genuine. Even when he was writing to her there was no spark left of the old romance! Some hint of a recollection of past feelings, some half-concealed reference to the former passion might have been allowed to him! She as a woman,—as a woman all whose fortune must depend on marriage,—could indulge in no such allusions; but surely he need not have been so hard!

But still there was another memorandum. At the

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present moment she would do all that he desired as far as it was in her power. She was anxious that he should marry Lady Mary Palliser, though so anxious also that something of his love should remain with herself! She was quite willing to convey that message, —if it might be done without offence to the Duke. She was there with the object of ingratiating herself with the Duke. She must not impede her favour with the Duke by making herself the medium of any secret communications between Mary and her lover.

But how should she serve Tregear without risk of offending the Duke? She read the letter again and again, and thinking it to be a good letter she determined to show it to the Duke.

"Mr. Tregear has got in at Polpenno," she said on the day on which she and the Duke had received their letters.

"So I hear from Silverbridge."

"It will be a good thing for him, I suppose."

"I do not know," said the Duke coldly.

"He is my cousin and I have always been interested in his welfare."

"That is natural."

"And a seat in Parliament will give him something to do."

"Certainly it ought," said the Duke.

"I do not think that he is an idle man." To this the Duke made no answer. He did not wish to be made to talk about Tregear. "May I tell you why I say all this?" she asked softly, pressing her hand on the Duke's arm ever so gently. To this the Duke assented, but still coldly. "Because I want to know what I ought to do. Would you mind reading that

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letter? Of course you will remember that Frank and I have been brought up almost as brother and sister."

The Duke took the letter in his hand and did read it, very slowly. "What he says about young men without means going into Parliament is true enough." This was not encouraging, but as the Duke went on reading, Mabel did not think it necessary to argue the matter. He had to read the last paragraph twice before he understood it. He did read it twice, and then folding the letter very slowly gave it back to his companion.

"What ought I to do?" asked Lady Mabel.

"As you and I, my dear, are friends, I think that any carrying of a message to Mary would be breaking confidence. I think that you should not speak to Mary about Mr. Tregear." Then he changed the subject. Lady Mabel of course understood that after that she could not say a word to Mary about the election at Polpenno.

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CHAPTER IV.

THE MEETING AT THE BOBTAILED FOX.

It was now the middle of December, and matters were not comfortable in the Runnymede country. The Major with much pluck had carried on his operations in opposition to the wishes of the resident members of the hunt. The owners of coverts had protested, and farmers had sworn that he should not ride over their lands. There had even been some talk among the younger men of thrashing him if he persevered. But he did persevere, and had managed to have one or two good runs. Now it was the fortune of the Runnymede hunt that many of those who rode with the hounds were strangers to the country,—men who came down by train from London, gentlemen of perhaps no great distinction, who could ride hard, but as to whom it was thought that as they did not provide the land to ride over, or the fences to be destroyed, or the coverts for the foxes, or the greater part of the subscription, they ought not to oppose those by whom all these things were supplied. But the Major, knowing where his strength lay, had managed to get a party to support him. The contract to hunt the country had been made with him in last March, and was good for one year. Having the kennels and the hounds under his command he did hunt the country; but he did so amidst a storm of contumely and ill will.

At last it was decided that a general meeting of the

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members of the hunt should be called together with the express object of getting rid of the Major. The gentlemen of the neighbourhood felt that the Major was not to be borne, and the farmers were very much stronger against him than the gentlemen. It had now become a settled belief among sporting men in England that the Major had with his own hands driven the nail into the horse's foot. Was it to be endured that the Runnymede farmers should ride to hounds under a master who had been guilty of such an iniquity as that? The Staines and Egham Gazette, which had always supported the Runnymede hunt, declared in very plain terms that all who rode with the Major were enjoying their sport out of the plunder which had been extracted from Lord Silverbridge. Then a meeting was called for Saturday, the 18th December, to be held at that well-known sporting little inn The Bobtailed Fox. The members of the hunt were earnestly called upon to attend. It was,—so said the printed document which was issued,—the only means by which the hunt could be preserved. If gentlemen who were interested did not put their shoulders to the wheel the Runnymede hunt must be regarded as a thing of the past. One of the documents was sent to the Major with an intimation that if he wished to attend no objection would be made to his presence. The chair would be taken at half-past twelve punctually by that popular and well-known old sportsman Mr. Mahogany Topps.

Was ever the master of a hunt treated in such a way! His presence not objected to! As a rule the master of a hunt does not attend hunt meetings because the matter to be discussed is generally that of the money to be subscribed for him, as to which it is as well he

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should not hear the pros and cons. But it is presumed that he is to be regarded as the hero of the hour, and that he is to be treated to his face, and spoken of behind his back, with love, admiration, and respect. But now this master was told his presence would be allowed! And then this fox-hunting meeting was summoned for half-past twelve on a hunting day;—when, as all the world knew, the hounds were to meet at eleven, twelve miles off! Was ever anything so base? said the Major to himself. But he resolved that he would be equal to the occasion. He immediately issued cards to all the members, stating that on that day the meet had been changed from Croppingham Bushes, which was ever so much on the other side of Bagshot, to The Bobtailed Fox,—for the benefit of the hunt at large, said the card,—and that the hounds would be there at half-past one.

Whatever might happen, he must show a spirit. In all this there were one or two of the London brigade who stood fast to him. "Cock your tail, Tifto," said one hard-riding supporter, "and show 'em you are n't afraid of nothing." So Tifto cocked his tail and went to the meeting in his best new scarlet coat, with his whitest breeches, his pinkest boots, and his neatest little bows at his knees. He entered the room with his horn in his hand, as a symbol of authority, and took off his hunting-cap to salute the assembly with a jaunty air. He had taken two glasses of cherry brandy, and as long as the stimulant lasted would no doubt be able to support himself with audacity.

Old Mr. Topps in rising from his chair did not say very much. He had been hunting in the Runnymede country for nearly fifty years, and had never seen any-

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thing so sad as this before. It made him, he knew, very unhappy. As for foxes, there were always plenty of foxes in his coverts. His friend Mr. Jawstock, on the right, would explain what all this was about. All he wanted was to see the Runnymede hunt properly kept up. Then he sat down, and Mr. Jawstock rose to his legs.

Mr. Jawstock was a gentleman well known in the Runnymede country, who had himself been instrumental in bringing Major Tifto into these parts. There is often some one in a hunting country who never becomes a master of hounds himself, but who has almost as much to say about the business as the master himself. Sometimes at hunt meetings he is rather unpopular, as he is always inclined to talk. But there are occasions on which his services are felt to be valuable,—as were Mr. Jawstock's at present. He was about forty-five years of age, was not much given to riding, owned no coverts himself, and was not a man of wealth; but he understood the nature of hunting, knew all its laws, and was a judge of horses, of hounds,—and of men; and could say a thing when he had to say it.

Mr. Jawstock sat on the right hand of Mr. Topps, and a place was left for the master opposite. The task to be performed was neither easy nor pleasant. It was necessary that the orator should accuse the gentleman opposite to him,—a man with whom he himself had been very intimate,—of iniquity so gross and so mean that nothing worse can be conceived. "You are a swindler, a cheat, a rascal of the very deepest dye;—a rogue so mean that it is revolting to be in the same room with you!" That was what Mr. Jawstock had to say. And he said it. Looking round the room,

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occasionally appealing to Mr. Topps, who on these occasions would lift up his hands in horror, but never letting his eye fall for a moment on the Major, Mr. Jawstock told the story. "I did not see it done," said he. "I know nothing about it. I never was at Doncaster in my life. But you have evidence of what the Jockey Club thinks. The master of our hunt has been banished from race-courses." Here there was considerable opposition, and a few short but excited little dialogues were maintained;—throughout all which Tifto restrained himself like a Spartan. "At any rate he has been thoroughly disgraced," continued Mr. Jawstock, "as a sporting man. He has been driven out of the Beargarden Club." "He resigned in disgust at their treatment," said a friend of the Major's. "Then let him resign in disgust at ours," said Mr. Jawstock, "for we won't have him here. Cæsar would n't keep a wife who was suspected of infidelity, nor will the Runnymede country endure a master of hounds who is supposed to have driven a nail into a horse's foot."

Two or three other gentleman had something to say before the Major was allowed to speak,—the upshot of the discourse of all of them being the same. The Major must go.

Then the Major got up, and certainly as far as attention went he had full justice done him. However clamorous they might intend to be afterwards, that amount of fair play they were all determined to afford him. The Major was not excellent at speaking, but he did perhaps better than might have been expected. "This is a very disagreeable position," he said, "very disagreeable indeed. As for the nail in the horse's

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foot I know no more about it than the babe unborn. But I 've got two things to say, and I 'll say what are n't the most consequence first. These hounds belong to me." Here he paused, and a loud contradiction came from many parts of the room. Mr. Jawstock, however, proposed that the Major should be heard to the end. "I say they belong to me," repeated the Major. "If anybody tries his hand at anything else the law will soon set that to rights. But that are n't of much consequence. What I 've got to say is this. Let the matter be referred. If that 'orse had a nail run into his foot,—and I don't say he had n't,—who was the man most injured? Why, Lord Silverbridge. Everybody knows that. I suppose he dropped well on to £80,000! I propose to leave it to him. Let him say. He ought to know more about it than any one. He and I were partners in the horse. His lordship are n't very sweet upon me just at present. Nobody need fear that he 'll do me a good turn. I say leave it to him."

In this matter the Major had certainly been well advised. A rumour had become prevalent among sporting circles that Silverbridge had refused to condemn the Major. It was known that he had paid his bets without delay, and that he had, to some extent, declined to take advice from the leaders of the Jockey Club. The Major's friends were informed that the young lord had refused to vote against him at the club. Was it not more than probable that if this matter were referred to him he would refuse to give a verdict against his late partner?

The Major sat down, put on his cap, and folded his arms akimbo, with his horn sticking out from his left

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hand. For a time there was general silence, broken, however, by murmurs in different parts of the room. Then Mr. Jawstock whispered something into the ear of the chairman, and Mr. Topps, rising from his seat, suggested to Tifto that he should retire. "I think so," said Mr. Jawstock. "The proposition you have made can be discussed only in your absence." Then the Major held a consultation with one of his friends, and after that did retire.

When he was gone the real hubbub of the meeting commenced. There were some there who understood the nature of Lord Silverbridge's feelings in the matter. "He would be the last man in England to declare him guilty," said Mr. Jawstock. "Whatever my lord says, he shan't ride across my land," said a farmer in the background. "I don't think any gentleman ever made a fairer proposition,—since anything was anything," said a friend of the Major's, a gentleman who kept livery stables in Long Acre. "We won't have him here," said another farmer,—whereupon Mr. Topps shook his head sadly. "I don't think any gentleman ought to be condemned without a 'earing," said one of Tifto's admirers, "and where you 're to get any one to hunt the country like him, I don't know as anybody is prepared to say." "We 'll manage that," said a young gentleman from the neighbourhood of Bagshot, who thought that he could hunt the country himself quite as well as Major Tifto. "He must go from here; that 's the long and the short of it," said Mr. Jawstock. "Put it to the vote, Mr. Jawstock," said the livery-stable keeper. Mr. Topps, who had had great experience in public meetings, hereupon expressed an opinion that they might as well go to a vote. No doubt he

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was right if the matter was one which must sooner or later be decided in that manner.

Mr. Jawstock looked round the room trying to calculate what might be the effect of a show of hands. The majority was with him; but he was well aware that of his majority some few would be drawn away by the apparent justice of Tifto's proposition. And what was the use of voting? Let them vote as they might, it was out of the question that Tifto should remain master of the hunt. But the chairman had acceded, and on such occasions it is difficult to go against the chairman.

Then there came a show of hands,—first for those who desired to refer the matter to Lord Silverbridge, and afterwards for Tifto's direct enemies,—for those who were anxious to banish Tifto out of hand, without reference to any one. At last the matter was settled. To the great annoyance of Mr. Jawstock and the farmers the meeting voted that Lord Silverbridge should be invited to give his opinion as to the innocence or guilt of his late partner.

The Major's friends carried the discussion out to him as he sat on horseback, as though he had altogether gained the battle and was secure in his position as master of the Runnymede hunt for the next dozen years. But at the same time there came a message from Mr. Mahogany Topps. It was now half-past two, and Mr. Topps expressed a hope that Major Tifto would not draw the country on the present occasion. The Major, thinking that it might be as well to conciliate his enemies, rode solemnly and slowly home to Tally-ho Lodge in the middle of his hounds.

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CHAPTER V.

THE MAJOR IS DEPOSED.

WHEN Silverbridge undertook to return with Tregear to London, instead of going off direct to Matching it is to be feared that he was simply actuated by a desire to postpone his further visit to his father's house. He had thought that Lady Mabel would surely be gone before his task at Polpenno was completed. As soon as he should again find himself in his father's presence he would at once declare his intention of marrying Isabel Boncassen. But he could not see his way to doing it while Lady Mabel should be in the house.

"I think you will find Mabel still at Matching," said Tregear on their way up. "She will wait for you, I fancy."

"I don't know why she should wait for me," said Silverbridge, almost angrily.

"I thought that you and she were fast friends."

"I suppose we are—after a fashion. She might wait for you perhaps."

"I think she would,—if I could go there."

"You are much thicker with her than I ever was. You went to see her at Grex,—when nobody else was there."

"Is Miss Cassewary nobody?"

"Next door to it," said Silverbridge, half jealous of the favours shown to Tregear.

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"I thought," said Tregear, "that there would be a closer intimacy between you and her."

"I don't know why you should think so."

"Had you never any such idea yourself?"

"I have n't any now,—so there may be an end of it. I don't think a fellow ought to be cross-questioned on such a subject."

"Then I am very sorry for Mabel," said Tregear. This was uttered solemnly, so that Silverbridge found himself debarred from making any flippant answer. He could not altogether defend himself. He had been quite justified, he thought, in changing his mind, but he did not like to own that he had changed it so quickly.

"I think we had better not talk any more about it," he said, after pausing for a few moments. After that nothing more was said between them on the subject.

Up in town Silverbridge spent two or three days pleasantly enough, while a thunderbolt was being prepared for him, or rather, in truth, two thunderbolts. During these days he was much with Tregear; and though he could not speak freely of his own matrimonial projects, still he was brought round to give some sort of assent to the engagement between Tregear and his sister. This new position which his friend had won for himself did in some degree operate on his judgment. It was not perhaps that he himself imagined that Tregear as a member of Parliament would be worthier, but that he fancied that such would be the Duke's feelings. The Duke had declared that Tregear was nobody. That could hardly be said of a man who had a seat in the House of Commons;—certainly could not be said by so staunch a politician as the Duke.

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But had he known of those two thunderbolts he would not have enjoyed his time at the Beargarden. The thunderbolts fell upon him in the shape of two letters which reached his hands at the same time and were as follows:

"The Bobtailed Fox, Egham, 18th December.

"My Lord,—At a meeting held in this house to-day in reference to the hunting of the Runnymede country, it was proposed that the management of the hounds should be taken out of the hands of Major Tifto in consequence of certain conduct of which it is alleged that he was guilty at the last Doncaster races.

"Major Tifto was present and requested that your lordship's opinion should be asked as to his guilt. I do not know myself that we are warranted in troubling your lordship on the subject. I am, however, commissioned by the majority of the gentlemen who were present to ask you whether you think that Major Tifto's conduct on that occasion was of such a nature as to make him unfit to be the depositary of that influence, authority, and intimacy which ought to be at the command of a master of hounds.

"I feel myself bound to inform your lordship that the hunt generally will be inclined to place great weight upon your opinion; but that it does not undertake to reinstate Major Tifto, even should your opinion be in his favour.

"I have the honour to be, my lord,

"Your lordship's most obedient servant,

"JEREMIAH JAWSTOCK.

"Juniper Lodge, Staines."

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Mr. Jawstock when he had written this letter was proud of his own language, but still felt that the application was a very lame one. Why ask any man for an opinion, and tell him at the same time that his opinion might probably not be taken? And yet no other alternative had been left to him. The meeting had decided that the application should be made; but Mr. Jawstock was well aware that, let the young lord's answer be what it might, the Major would not be endured as master in the Runnymede country. Mr. Jawstock felt that the passage in which he explained that a master of hounds should be a depositary of influence and intimacy was good;—but yet the application was lame, very lame.

Lord Silverbridge as he read it thought that it was very unfair. It was a most disagreeable thunderbolt. Then he opened the second letter, of which he well knew the handwriting. It was from the Major. Tifto's letters were very legible, but the writing was cramped, showing that the operation had been performed with difficulty. Silverbridge had hoped that he might never receive another epistle from his late partner. The letter, as follows, had been drawn out for Tifto in rough by the livery-stable keeper in Long Acre.

"My dear Lord Silverbridge,—I venture respectfully to appeal to your lordship for an act of justice. Nobody has more of a true-born Englishman's feeling of fair play between man and man than your lordship; and as you and me have been a good deal together, and your lordship ought to know me pretty well, I venture to appeal to your lordship for a good word.

"All that story from Doncaster has got down into

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the country where I am M.F.H. Nobody could have been more sorry than me that your lordship dropped your money. Would not I have been prouder than anything to have a horse in my name win the race? Was it likely I should lame him? Anyways, I did n't, and I don't think your lordship thinks it was me. Of course your lordship and me is two now;—but that don't alter the facts.

"What I want is your lordship to send me a line, just stating your lordship's opinion that I did n't do it, and did n't have nothing to do with it;—which I did n't. There was a meeting at The Bobtailed Fox yesterday, and the gentlemen was all of a mind to go by what your lordship would say. I could n't desire nothing fairer. So I hope your lordship will stand to me now, and write something that will pull me through.

"With all respects, I beg to remain

"Your lordship's most dutiful servant,

"T. Tifto."

There was something in this letter which the Major himself did not quite approve. There was an absence of familiarity about it which annoyed him. He would have liked to call upon his late partner to declare that a more honourable man than Major Tifto had never been known on the turf. But he felt himself to be so far down in the world that it was not safe for him to hold an opinion of his own, even against the livery-stable keeper!

Silverbridge was for a time in doubt whether he should answer the letters at all, and if so how he should answer them. In regard to Mr. Jawstock and the meeting at large, he regarded the application as an im-

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pertinence. But as to Tifto himself he vacillated much between pity, contempt, and absolute condemnation. Everybody had assured him that the man had certainly been guilty. The fact that he had made bets against their joint horse,—bets as to which he had said nothing till after the race was over,—had been admitted by himself. And yet it was possible that the man might not be such a rascal as to be unfit to manage the Runnymede hounds. Having himself got rid of Tifto, he would have been glad that the poor wretch should have been left with his hunting honours. But he did not think that he could write to his late partner any letter that would preserve those honours to him.

At Tregear's advice he referred the matter to Mr. Lupton. Mr. Lupton was of opinion that both the letters should be answered, but that the answer to each should be very short. "There is a prejudice about the world just at present," said Mr. Lupton, "in favour of answering letters. I don't see why I am to be subjected to an annoyance because another man has taken a liberty. But it is better to submit to public opinion. Public opinion thinks that letters should be answered." Then Mr. Lupton dictated the answers.

"Lord Silverbridge presents his compliments to Mr. Jawstock, and begs to say that he does not feel himself called upon to express any opinion as to Major Tifto's conduct at Doncaster."

That was the first. The second was rather less simple, but not much longer.

"Sir,—I do not feel myself called upon to express any opinion either to you or to others as to your con-

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duct at Doncaster. Having received a letter on the subject from Mr. Jawstock I have written to him to this effect.

"Your obedient servant,

"SILVERBRIDGE.

"To T. Tifto, Esq.,
"Tally-ho Lodge."

Poor Tifto, when he got this very curt epistle, was broken-hearted. He did not dare to show it. Day after day he told the livery-stable keeper that he had received no reply, and at last asserted that his appeal had remained altogether unanswered. Even this he thought was better than acknowledging the rebuff which had reached him. As regarded the meeting which had been held,—and any further meetings which might be held,—at The Bobtailed Fox, he did not see the necessity, as he explained to the livery-stable keeper, of acknowledging that he had written any letter to Lord Silverbridge.

The letter to Mr. Jawstock was of course brought forward. Another meeting at The Bobtailed Fox was convened. But in the meantime hunting had been discontinued in the Runnymede country. The Major with all his pluck, with infinite cherry brandy, could not do it. Men who had a few weeks since been on very friendly terms, and who called each other Dick and Harry when the squabble first began, were now talking of "punching" each other's heads. Special whips had been procured by men who intended to ride, and special bludgeons by the young farmers who intended that nobody should ride as long as Major Tifto kept the hounds. It was said that the police would interfere. It was whispered that hounds would be shot,

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—though Mr. Topps, Mr. Jawstock, and others declared that no crime so heinous as that had ever been contemplated in the Runnymede country.

The difficulties were too many for poor Tifto, and the hounds were not brought out again under his influence.

A second meeting was summoned, and an invitation was sent to the Major similar to that which he had before received;—but on this occasion he did not appear. Nor were there many of the gentlemen down from London. This second meeting might almost have been called select. Mr. Mahogany Topps was there of course, in the chair, and Mr. Jawstock took the place of honour and of difficulty on his right hand. There was the young gentleman from Bagshot, who considered himself quite fit to take Tifto's place if somebody else would pay the bills and settle the money, and there was the sporting old parson from Croppingham. Three or four other members of the hunt were present, and perhaps half-a-dozen farmers, ready to declare that Major Tifto should never be allowed to cross their fields again.

But there was no opposition. Mr. Jawstock read the young lord's note, and declared that it was quite as much as he expected. He considered that the note, short as it was, must be decisive. Major Tifto, in appealing to Lord Silverbridge, had agreed to abide by his lordship's answer, and that answer was now before them. Mr. Jawstock ventured to propose that Major Tifto should be declared to be no longer master of the Runnymede hounds. The parson from Croppingham seconded the proposition, and Major Tifto was formally deposed.

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CHAPTER VI.

"NO ONE CAN TELL WHAT MAY COME TO PASS."

THEN Lord Silverbridge necessarily went down to Matching, knowing that he must meet Mabel Grex. Why should she have prolonged her visit? No doubt it might be very pleasant for her to be his father's guest at Matching, but she had been there above a month! He could understand that his father should ask her to remain. His father was still brooding over that foolish communication which had been made to him on the night of the dinner at the Beargarden. His father was still intending to take Mabel to his arms as a daughter-in-law. But Lady Mabel herself knew that it could not be so! The whole truth had been told to her. Why should she remain at Matching for the sake of being mixed up in a scene the acting of which could not fail to be disagreeable to her?

He found the house very quiet and nearly empty. Mrs. Finn was there with the two girls, and Mr. Warburton had come back. Miss Cassewary had gone to a brother's house. Other guests to make Christmas merry there were none. As he looked round at the large rooms he reflected that he himself was there only for a special purpose. It was his duty to break the news of his intended marriage to his father. As he stood before the fire, thinking how best he might do this, it occurred to him that a letter from a distance would have been the ready and simple way. But then

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it had occurred to him also, when at a distance, that a declaration of his purpose face to face was the simplest and readiest way. If you have to go headlong into the water you should take your plunge without hesitating. So he told himself, making up his mind that he would have it all out that evening.

At dinner Lady Mabel sat next to his father, and he could watch the special courtesy with which the Duke treated the girl whom he was so desirous of introducing to his house. Silverbridge could not talk about the election at Polpenno because all conversation about Tregear was interdicted in the presence of his sister. He could say nothing as to the Runnymede hunt and the two thunderbolts which had fallen on him, as Major Tifto was not a subject on which he could expatiate in the presence of his father. He asked a few questions about the shooting, and referred with great regret to his absence from the Brake country.

"I am sure Mr. Cassewary could spare you for another fortnight," the Duke said to his neighbour, alluding to a visit which she now intended to make.

"If so he would have to spare me altogether," said Mabel, "for I must meet my father in London in the middle of January."

"Could you not put it off to another year?"

"You would think I had taken root and was growing at Matching."

"Of all our products you would be the most delightful, and the most charming,—and we would hope the most permanent," said the courteous Duke.

"After being here so long I need hardly say that I like Matching better than any place in the world. I suppose it is the contrast to Grex."

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"Grex was a palace," said the Duke, "before a wall of this house had been built."

"Grex is very old, and very wild,—and very uncomfortable. But I love it dearly. Matching is the very reverse of Grex."

"Not, I hope, in your affections."

"I did not mean that. I think one likes a contrast. But I must go, say, on the 1st of January, to pick up Miss Cassewary."

It was certain, therefore, that she was going on the 1st of January. How would it be if he put off the telling of his story for yet another week, till she should be gone. Then he looked around and bethought himself that the time would hang very heavy with him. And his father would daily expect from him a declaration exactly opposed to that which he had to make. He had no horses to ride. As he went on listening he almost convinced himself that the proper thing to do would be to go back to London and thence write to his father. He made no confession to his father on that night.

On the next morning there was a heavy fall of snow, but nevertheless everybody managed to go to church. The Duke, as he looked at Lady Mabel tripping along over the swept paths in her furs and short petticoats and well-made boots, thought that his son was a lucky fellow to have the chance of winning the love of such a girl. No remembrance, no suspicion of Miss Boncassen came across his mind as he saw them close together. It was so important that Silverbridge should marry, and thus be kept from further follies! And it was so momentous to the fortunes of the Palliser family generally that he should marry well! In think-

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ing so it did not occur to him that the granddaughter of an American labourer might be offered to him. A young lady fit to be Duchess of Omnium was not to be found everywhere. But this girl, he thought, as he saw her walking briskly and strongly through the snow, with every mark of health about her, with every sign of high breeding, very beautiful, exquisite in manner, gracious as a goddess, was fit to be a duchess! Silverbridge at this moment was walking close to her side, —in good looks, in gracious manner, in high breeding her equal,—in worldly gifts infinitely her superior. Surely she would not despise him! Silverbridge at the moment was expressing a hope that the sermon would not be very long.

After lunch Mabel came suddenly behind the chair on which Silverbridge was sitting and asked him to take a walk with her. Was she not afraid of the snow? "Perhaps you are," she said, laughing. "I do not mind it in the least." When they were but a few yards from the front door she put her hand upon his arm, and spoke to him as though she had arranged the walk with reference to that special question, "And now tell me all about Frank."

She had arranged everything. She had a plan before her now, and had determined in accordance with that plan that she would say nothing to disturb him on this occasion. If she could succeed in bringing him into good humour with herself, that should be sufficient for to-day. "Now tell me everything about Frank."

"Frank is member of Parliament for Polpenno. That is all."

"That is so like a man and so unlike a woman. What did he say? What did he do? How did he look?

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What did you say? What did you do? How did you look?"

"We looked very miserable, when we got wet through, walking about all day in the rain."

"Was that necessary?"

"Quite necessary. We looked so mean and draggled that nobody would have voted for us, only that poor Mr. Carbottle looked meaner and more draggled."

"The Duke says you made ever so many speeches."

"I should think I did. It is very easy to make speeches down at a place like that. Tregear spoke like a book."

"He spoke well?"

"Awfully well. He told them that all the good things that had ever been done in Parliament had been carried by the tories. He went back to Pitt's time, and had it all at his fingers' ends."

"And quite true."

"That 's just what it was not. It was all a crammer. But it did as well."

"I am glad he is a member. Don't you think the Duke will come round a little now?"

When Tregear and the election had been sufficiently discussed, they came by degrees to Major Tifto and the two thunderbolts. Silverbridge, when he perceived that nothing was to be said about Isabel Boncassen, or his own freedom in the matter of love-making, was not sorry to have a friend from whom he could find sympathy for himself in his own troubles. With some encouragement from Mabel the whole story was told. "Was it not a great impertinence?" she asked.

"It was an awful bore. What could I say? I was not going to pronounce judgment against the poor

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devil. I dare say he was good enough for Mr. Jawstock."

"But I suppose he did cheat horribly."

"I dare say he did. A great many of them do cheat. But what of that? I was not bound to give him a character, bad or good."

"Certainly not."

"He had not been my servant. It was such a letter. I 'll show it you when we get in!—asking whether Tifto was fit to be the depositary of the intimacy of the Runnymede hunt! And then Tif's letter;—I almost wept over that."

"How could he have had the audacity to write at all!"

"He said that 'him and me had been a good deal together.' Unfortunately that was true. Even now I am not quite sure that he lamed the horse himself."

"Everybody thinks he did. Percival says there is no doubt about it."

"Percival knows nothing about it. Three of the gang ran away, and he stood his ground. That 's about all we do know."

"What did you say to him?"

"I had to address him as 'sir,' and beg him not to write to me any more. Of course they mean to get rid of him, and I could n't do him any good. Poor Tifto! Upon the whole, I think I hate Jawstock worse than Tifto."

Lady Mabel was content with her afternoon's work. When they had been at Matching before the Polpenno election, there had apparently been no friendship between them,—at any rate no confidential friendship. Miss Boncassen had been there and he had had neither

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ears nor eyes for any one else. But now something like the feeling of old days had been restored. She had not done much towards her great object;—but then she had known that nothing could be done till he should again be in good humour with her.

On the Sunday, the Monday, and the Tuesday they were again together. In some of these interviews Silverbridge described the Polpenno people, and told her how Miss Tregear had been reassured by his eloquence. He also read to her the Jawstock and Tifto correspondence, and was complimented by her as to his prudence and foresight. "To tell the truth, I consulted Mr. Lupton," he said, not liking to take credit for wisdom which had not been his own. Then they talked about Grex, and Killancodlem, about Gerald and the shooting, about Mary's love for Tregear, and about the work of the coming session. On all these subjects they were comfortable and confidential,—Miss Boncassen's name never having been as yet so much as mentioned.

But still the real work was before her. She had not hoped to bring him round to kneel once more at her feet by such gentle measures as these. She had not dared to dream that he could in this way be taught to forget the past autumn and all its charms. She knew well that there was something very difficult before her. But, if that difficult thing might be done at all, these were the preparations which must be made for the doing of it.

It was arranged that she should leave Matching on Saturday, the first day of the new year. Things had gone on in the manner described till the Thursday had come. The Duke had been impatient but had restrained himself. He had seen that they were much

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together and that they were apparently friends. He, too, told himself that there were two more days, and that before the end of those days everything might be pleasantly settled!

It had become a matter of course that Silverbridge and Mabel should walk together in the afternoon. He himself had felt that there was danger in this,—not danger that he should be untrue to Isabel, but that he should make others think that he was true to Mabel. But he excused himself on the plea that he and Mabel had been intimate friends,—were still intimate friends, and that she was going away in a day or two. Mary, who watched it all, was sure that misery was being prepared for some one. She was aware that by this time her father was anxious to welcome Mabel as his daughter-in-law. She strongly suspected that something had been said between her father and her brother on the subject. But then she had Isabel Boncassen's direct assurance that Silverbridge was engaged to her! Now, when Isabel's back was turned, Silverbridge and Mabel were always together.

On the Thursday after lunch they were again out together It had become so much a habit that the walk repeated itself without an effort. It had been part of Mabel's scheme that it should be so. During all this morning she had been thinking of her scheme. It was all but hopeless. So much she had declared to herself. But forlorn hopes do sometimes end in splendid triumphs. That which she might gain was so much! And what could she lose? The sweet bloom of her maiden shame? That, she told herself, with bitterest inward tears, was already gone from her. Frank Tregear at any rate knew where her heart had

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been given. Frank Tregear knew that having lost her heart to one man she was anxious to marry another. He knew that she was willing to accept the coronet of a duchess as her consolation. That bloom of her maiden shame, of which she quite understood the sweetness, the charm, the value,—was gone when she had brought herself to such a state that any human being should know that, loving one man, she should be willing to marry another. The sweet treasure was gone from her. Its aroma was fled. It behoved her now to be ambitious, cautious,—and if possible successful.

When first she had so resolved, success seemed to be easily within her reach. Of all the golden youths that crossed her path no one was so pleasant to her eye, to her ear, to her feelings generally as this Duke's young heir. There was a coming manliness about him which she liked,—and she liked even the slight want of present manliness. Putting aside Frank Tregear, she could go nearer to loving him than any other man she had ever seen. With him she would not be turned from her duties by disgust, by dislike, or dismay. She could even think that the time would come when she might really love him. Then she had all but succeeded, and she might have succeeded altogether had she been but a little more prudent. But she had allowed her great prize to escape from her fingers.

But the prize was not yet utterly beyond her grasp. To recover it,—to recover even the smallest chance of recovering it, there would be need of great exertion. She must be bold, sudden, unwomanlike,—and yet with such display of woman's charms that he at least should discover no want. She must be false, but false with such perfect deceit that he must regard her as a pearl

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of truth. If anything could lure him back it must be his conviction of her passionate love. And she must be strong;—so strong as to overcome not only his weakness, but all that was strong in him. She knew that he did love that other girl,—and she must overcome even that. And to do this she must prostrate herself at his feet,—as, since the world began, it has been man's province to prostrate himself at the feet of the woman he loves.

To do this she must indeed bid adieu to the sweet bloom of her maiden shame! But had she not done so already when, by the side of the brook at Killancodlem, she had declared to him plainly enough her despair at hearing that he loved that other girl? Though she were to grovel at his feet she could not speak more plainly than she had spoken then. She could not tell her story now more plainly than she had done then; but,—though the chances were small,—perchance she might tell it more effectually.

"Perhaps this will be our last walk," she said. "Come down to the seat over the river."

"Why should it be the last? You 'll be here to-morrow."

"There are so many slips in such things," she said, laughing. "You may get a letter from your constituents that will want all the day to answer. Or your father may have a political communication to make to me. But at any rate come." So they went to the seat.

It was a spot in the park from whence there was a distant view over many lands, and low beneath the bench, which stood on the edge of a steep bank, ran a stream which made a sweeping bend in this place, so that a reach of the little river might be seen both

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to the right and to the left. Though the sun was shining, the snow under their feet was hard with frost. It was an air such as one sometimes finds in England, and often in America. Though the cold was very perceptible, though water in the shade was freezing at this moment, there was no feeling of damp, no sense of bitter wind. It was a sweet and jocund air, such as would make young people prone to run and skip. "You are not going to sit down with all the snow on the bench," said Silverbridge.

On their way thither she had not said a word that would disturb him. She had spoken to him of the coming session, and had managed to display to him the interest which she took in his parliamentary career. In doing this she had flattered him to the top of his bent. If he would return to his father's politics, then would she too become a renegade. Would he speak in the next session? She hoped he would speak. And if he did, might she be there to hear him? She was cautious not to say a word of Frank Tregear, understanding something of that strange jealousy which could exist even when he who was jealous did not love the woman who caused it.

"No," she said, "I do not think we can sit. But still I like to be here with you. All that some day will be your own." Then she stretched her hands out to the far view.

"Some of it, I suppose. I don't think it is all ours. As for that, if we cared for extent of acres, one ought to go to Barsetshire."

"Is that larger?"

"Twice as large, I believe, and yet none of the family like being there. The rental is very well."

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"And the borough," she said, leaning on his arm and looking up into his face. "What a happy fellow you ought to be!"

"Bar Tifto,—and Mr. Jawstock."

"You have got rid of Tifto and all those troubles very easily."

"Thanks to the governor."

"Yes, indeed. I do love your father so dearly."

"So do I,—rather."

"May I tell you something about him?" As she asked the question she was standing very close to him, leaning upon his arm, with her left hand crossed upon her right. Had others been there, of course she would not have stood in such a guise. She knew that,—and he knew it too. Of course there was something in it of declared affection,—of that kind of love which most of us have been happy enough to give and receive, without intending to show more than true friendship will allow at special moments.

"Don't tell me anything about him I shan't like to hear."

"Ah;—that is so hard to know. I wish you would like to hear it."

"What can it be?"

"I cannot tell you now."

"Why not? And why did you offer?"

"Because——. Oh, Silverbridge!"

He certainly as yet did not understand it. It had never occurred to him that she would know what were his father's wishes. Perhaps he was slow of comprehension as he urged her to tell him what this was about his father. "What can you tell me about him that I should not like to hear?"

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"You do not know? Oh, Silverbridge, I think you know." Then there came upon him a glimmering of the truth. "You do know." And she stood apart looking him full in the face.

"I do not know what you can have to tell me."

"No;—no. It is not I that should tell you. But yet it is so. Silverbridge, what did you say to me when you came to me that morning in the square?"

"What did I say?"

"Was I not entitled to think that you—loved me?" To this he had nothing to reply, but stood before her silent and frowning. "Think of it, Silverbridge. Was it not so? And because I did not at once tell you all the truth, because I did not there say that my heart was all yours, were you right to leave me?"

"You only laughed at me."

"No;—no; no; I never laughed at you. How could I laugh when you were all the world to me? Ask Frank; he knew. Ask Miss Cass; she knew. And can you say you did not know; you, you, you, yourself? Can any girl suppose that such words as these are to mean nothing when they have been spoken? You knew I loved you."

"No;—no."

"You must have known it. I will never believe but that you knew it. Why should your father be so sure of it?"

"He never was sure of it."

"Yes, Silverbridge; yes. There is not one in the house who does not see that he treats me as though he expected me to be his son's wife. Do you not know that he wishes it?" He fain would not have answered this; but she paused for his answer and then

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repeated her question. "Do you not know that he wishes it?"

"I think he does," said Silverbridge; "but it can never be so."

"Oh, Silverbridge;—oh, my loved one! Do not say that to me! Do not kill me at once!" Now she placed her hands one on each arm as she stood opposite to him and looked up into his face. "You said you loved me once. Why do you desert me now? Have you a right to treat me like that;—when I tell you that you have all my heart?" The tears were now streaming down her face, and they were not counterfeit tears.

"You know," he said, submitting to her hands, but not lifting his arm to embrace her.

"What do I know?"

"That I have given all I have to give to another." As he said this he looked away sternly, over her shoulder, to the distance.

"That American girl!" she exclaimed, starting back, with some show of sternness also on her brow.

"Yes;—that American girl," said Silverbridge.

Then she recovered herself immediately. Indignation, natural indignation, would not serve her turn in the present emergency. "You know that cannot be. You ought to know it. What will your father say? You have not dared to tell him. That is so natural," she added, trying to appease his frown. "How possibly can it be told to him? I will not say a word against her."

"No; do not do that."

"But there are fitnesses of things which such a one

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as you cannot disregard without preparing for yourself a whole life of repentance."

"Look here, Mabel."

"Well."

"I will tell you the truth."

"Well."

"I would sooner lose all—the rank I have; the rank that I am to have; all these lands that you have been looking on; my father's wealth, my seat in Parliament,—everything that fortune has done for me,—I would give them all up, sooner than lose her." Now at any rate he was a man. She was sure of that now. This was more, very much more, not only than she had expected from him, but more than she had thought it possible that his character should have produced.

His strength reduced her to weakness. "And I am nothing," she said.

"Yes, indeed; you are Lady Mabel Grex,—whom all women envy and whom all men honour."

"The poorest wretch this day under the sun."

"Do not say that. You should take shame to say that."

"I do take shame;—and I do say it. Sir, do you not feel what you owe me? Do you not know that you have made me the wretch I am? How did you dare to talk to me as you did talk when you were in London? You tell me that I am Lady Mabel Grex;—and yet you come to me with a lie on your lips,—with such a lie as that! You must have taken me for some nursemaid on whom you had condescended to cast your eye! It cannot be that even you should have dared to treat Lady Mabel Grex after such a

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fashion as that! And now you have cast your eye on this other girl. You can never marry her!"

"I shall endeavour to do so."

"You can never marry her," she said, stamping her foot. She had now lost all the caution which she had taught herself for the prosecution of her scheme,—all the care with which she had burdened herself. Now she was natural enough. "No,—you can never marry her. You could not show yourself after it in your clubs, or in Parliament, or in the world. Come home, do you say? No, I will not go to your home. It is not my home. Cold;—of course I am cold;—cold through to the heart."

"I cannot leave you alone here," he said, for she had now turned from him, and was walking with hurried steps and short turns on the edge of the bank, which at this place was almost a precipice.

"You have left me,—utterly in the cold,—more desolate than I am here even though I should spend the night among the trees. But I will go back, and will tell your father everything. If my father were other than he is,—if my brother were better to me, you would not have done this."

"If you had a legion of brothers it would have been the same," he said, turning sharp upon her.

They walked on together, but without a word till the house was in sight. Then she looked round at him, and stopped him on the path as she caught his eye. "Silverbridge!" she said.

"Lady Mabel!"

"Call me Mabel. At any rate call me Mabel. If I have said anything to offend you—I beg your pardon."

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"I am not offended,—but unhappy."

"If you are unhappy, what must I be? What have I to look forward to? Give me your hand, and say that we are friends."

"Certainly we are friends," he said as he gave her his hand.

"Who can tell what may come to pass?" To this he would make no answer, as it seemed to imply that some division between himself and Isabel Boncassen might possibly come to pass. "You will not tell any one that I love you."

"I tell such a thing as that!"

"But never forget it yourself. No one can tell what may come to pass."

Lady Mabel at once went up to her room. She had played her scene, but was well aware that she had played it altogether unsuccessfully.

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CHAPTER VII.

LORD GERALD IN FURTHER TROUBLE.

When Silverbridge got back to the house he was by no means well pleased with himself. In the first place he was unhappy to think that Mabel was unhappy and that he had made her so. And then she had told him that he would not have dared to have acted as he had done, but that her father and her brother were careless to defend her. He had replied fiercely that a legion of brothers ready to act on her behalf would not have altered his conduct; but not the less did he feel that he had behaved badly to her. It could not now be altered. He could not now be untrue to Isabel. But certainly he had said a word or two to Mabel which he could not remember without regret. He had not thought that a word from him could have been so powerful. Now, when that word was recalled to his memory by the girl to whom it had been spoken, he could not quite acquit himself.

And Mabel had declared to him that she would at once appeal to his father. There was an absurdity in this at which he could not but smile,—that the girl should complain to his father because he would not marry her! But even in doing this she might cause him great vexation. He could not bring himself to ask her not to tell her story to the Duke. He must take all that as it might come.

While he was thinking of all this in his own room a

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servant brought him two letters. From the first which he opened he soon perceived that it contained an account of more troubles. It was from his brother Gerald, and was written from Auld Reekie, the name of a house in Scotland belonging to Lord Nidderdale's people.

"Dear Silver,—I have got into a most awful scrape. That fellow Percival is here, and Dolly Longstaff, and Nidderdale, and Popplecourt, and Jack Hindes, and Perry who is in the Coldstreams, and one or two more, and there has been a lot of cards, and I have lost ever so much money. I would n't mind it so much but Percival has won it all,—a fellow I hate; and now I owe him—£3,400! He has just told me he is hard up and that he wants the money before the week is over. He can't be hard up because he has won from everybody;—but of course I had to tell him that I would pay him.

"Can you help me? Of course I know that I have been a fool. Percival knows what he is about and plays regularly for money. When I began I did n't think that I could lose above £20 or £30. But it got on from one thing to another, and when I woke this morning I felt I did n't know what to do with myself. You can't think how the luck went against me. Everybody says that they never saw such cards.

"And now do tell me how I am to get out of it. Could you manage it with Mr. Morton? Of course I will make it all right with you some day. Morton always lets you have whatever you want. But perhaps he could n't do this without letting the governor know. I would rather anything than that. There is

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some money owing at Oxford also which of course he must know.

"I was thinking that perhaps I might get it from some of those fellows in London. There are people called Comfort & Criball, who let men have money constantly. I know two or three up at Oxford who have had it from them. Of course I could n't go to them as you could do, for, in spite of what the governor said to us up in London one day, there is nothing that must come to me. But you could do anything in that way, and of course I would stand to it.

"I know you won't throw me over, because you always have been such a brick. But above all things don't tell the governor. Percival is such a nasty fellow, otherwise I should n't mind it. He spoke this morning as though I was treating him badly,—though the money was only lost last night; and he looked at me in a way that made me long to kick him. I told him not to flurry himself, and that he should have his money. If he speaks to me like that again I will kick him.

"I will be at Matching as soon as possible, but I cannot go till this is settled. Nid [meaning Lord Nidderdale] is a brick.

"Your affectionate brother,

"GERALD."

The other was from Nidderdale, and referred to the same subject.

"Dear Silverbridge,—Here has been a terrible nuisance. Last night some of the men got to playing cards, and Gerald lost a terribly large sum to Percival. I did all that I could to stop it, because I saw that

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Percival was going in for a big thing. I fancy that he got as much from Dolly Longstaff as he did from Gerald;—but it won't matter much to Dolly; or if it does, nobody cares. Gerald told me he was writing to you about it, so I am not betraying him.

"What is to be done? Of course Percival is behaving badly. He always does. I can't turn him out of the house, and he seems to intend to stick to Gerald till he has got the money. He has taken a cheque from Dolly dated two months hence. I am in an awful funk for fear Gerald should pitch into him. He will in a minute if anything rough is said to him. I suppose the straightest thing would be to go to the Duke at once, but Gerald won't hear of it. I hope you won't think me wrong to tell you. If I could help him I would. You know what a bad doctor I am for that sort of complaint.

"Yours always,
"NIDDERDALE."

The dinner-bell had rung before Silverbridge had come to an end of thinking of this new vexation, and he had not as yet made up his mind what he had better do for his brother. There was one thing as to which he was determined,—that it should not be done by him, nor, if he could prevent it, by Gerald. There should be no dealings with Comfort & Criball. The Duke had succeeded, at any rate, in filling his son's mind with a horror of aid of that sort. Nidderdale had suggested that the "straightest" thing would be to go direct to the Duke. That no doubt would be straight,—and efficacious. The Duke would not have allowed a boy of his to be a debtor to Lord Percival for a day, let

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the debt have been contracted how it might. But Gerald had declared against this course,—and Silverbridge himself would have been most unwilling to adopt it. How could he have told that story to the Duke while there was that other infinitely more important story of his own, which must be told at once?

In the midst of all these troubles he went down to dinner. "Lady Mabel," said the Duke, "tells me that you two have been to see Sir Guy's lookout."

She was standing close to the Duke, and whispered a word into his ear. "You said you would call me Mabel."

"Yes, sir," said Silverbridge, "and I have made up my mind that Sir Guy never stayed there very long in winter. It was awfully cold."

"I had furs on," said Mabel. "What a lovely spot it is, even in this weather." Then dinner was announced. She had not been cold. She could still feel the tingling heat of her blood as she had implored him to love her.

Silverbridge felt that he must write to his brother by the first post. The communication was of a nature that would bear no delay. If his hands had been free he would himself have gone off to Auld Reekie. At last he made up his mind. The first letter he wrote was neither to Nidderdale nor to Gerald, but to Lord Percival himself.

"Dear Percival,—Gerald writes me word that he has lost to you at cards £3,400, and he wants me to get him the money. It is a terrible nuisance, and he has been an ass. But of course I shall stand to him for anything he wants. I have n't got £3,400 in my

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pocket, and I don't know any one who has;—that is, among our set. But I send you my I. O. U. for the amount, and will promise to get you the money in two months. I suppose that will be sufficient and that you will not bother Gerald any more about it.

"Yours truly,

"SILVERBRIDGE."

Then he copied this letter and enclosed the copy in another which he wrote to his brother.

"Dear Gerald,—What an ass you have been! But I don't suppose you are worse than I was at Doncaster. I will have nothing to do with such people as Comfort & Criball. That is the sure way to the d——! As for telling Morton, that is only a polite and roundabout way of telling the governor. He would immediately ask the governor what was to be done. You will see what I have done. Of course I must tell the governor before the end of February, as I cannot get the money in any other way. But that I will do. It does seem hard upon him. Not that the money will hurt him much; but that he would so like to have a steady-going son.

"I suppose Percival won't make any bother about the I. O. U. He 'll be a fool if he does. I would n't kick him if I were you,—unless he says anything very bad. You would be sure to come to grief somehow. He is a beast.

"Your affectionate brother,

"SILVERBRIDGE."

With these letters that special grief was removed from his mind for a while. Looking over the dark river

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of possible trouble which seemed to run between the present moment and the time at which the money must be procured, he thought that he had driven off this calamity of Gerald's to an infinite distance. But into that dark river he must now plunge almost at once. On the next day he managed so that there should be no walk with Mabel. In the evening he could see that the Duke was uneasy;—but not a word was said to him. On the following morning Lady Mabel took her departure. When she went from the door, both the Duke and Silverbridge were there to bid her farewell. She smiled and was as gracious as though everything had gone according to her heart's delight. "Dear Duke, I am so obliged to you for your kindness," she said, as she put up her cheek for him to kiss. Then she gave her hand to Silverbridge. "Of course you will come and see me in town." And she smiled upon them all,—having courage enough to keep down all her sufferings.

"Come in here a moment, Silverbridge," said the father as they returned into the house together. "How is it now between you and her?"

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CHAPTER VIII.

"BONE OF MY BONE."

"How is it now between you and her?" That was the question which the Duke put to his son as soon as he had closed the door of the study. Lady Mabel had just been dismissed from the front door on her journey, and there could be no doubt as to the "her" intended. No such question would have been asked had not Silverbridge himself declared to his father his purpose of making Lady Mabel his wife. On that subject the Duke, without such authority, would not have interfered. But he had been consulted, had acceded, and had encouraged the idea by excessive liberality on his part. He had never dropped it out of his mind for a moment. But when he found that the girl was leaving his house without any explanation, then he became restless and inquisitive.

They say that perfect love casteth out fear. If it be so the love of children to their parents is seldom altogether perfect,—and perhaps had better not be quite perfect. With this young man it was not that he feared anything which his father could do to him, that he believed that in consequence of the declaration which he had to make his comforts and pleasures would be curtailed, or his independence diminished. He knew his father too well to dread such punishment. But he feared that he would make his father unhappy, and he was conscious that he had so often sinned in that way.

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He had stumbled so frequently! Though in action he would so often be thoughtless,—yet he understood perfectly the effect which had been produced on his father's mind by his conduct. He had it at heart "to be good to the governor," to gratify that most loving of all possible friends, who, as he knew well, was always thinking of his welfare. And yet he never had been "good to the governor";—nor had Gerald;—and to all this was added his sister's determined perversity. It was thus he feared his father.

He paused a moment, while the Duke stood with his back to the fire looking at him. "I 'm afraid that it is all over, sir," he said.

"All over!"

"I am afraid so."

"Why is it all over? Has she refused you?"

"Well, sir;—it is n't quite that." Then he paused again. It was so difficult to begin about Isabel Boncassen.

"I am sorry for that," said the Duke, almost hesitating; "very sorry. You will understand, I hope, that I should make no inquiry in such a matter unless I had felt myself warranted in doing so by what you had yourself told me in London."

"I understand all that."

"I have been very anxious about it, and have even gone so far as to make some preparations for what I had hoped would be your early marriage."

"Preparations!" exclaimed Silverbridge, thinking of church bells, bride cake, and wedding presents.

"As to the property. I am so anxious that you should enjoy all the settled independence which can belong to an English gentleman. I never plough or

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sow. I know no more of sheep and bulls than of the extinct animals of earlier ages. I would not have it so with you. I would fain see you surrounded by those things which ought to interest a nobleman in this country. Why is it all over with Lady Mabel Grex?"

The young man looked imploringly at his father, as though earnestly begging that nothing more might be said about Mabel. "I had changed my mind before I found out that she was really in love with me!" He could not say that. He could not hint that he might still have Mabel if he would. The only thing for him was to tell everything about Isabel Boncassen. He felt that in doing this he must begin with himself. "I have rather changed my mind, sir," he said, "since we were walking together in London that night."

"Have you quarrelled with Lady Mabel?"

"Oh dear, no. I am very fond of Mabel;—only not just like that."

"Not just like what?"

"I had better tell the whole truth at once."

"Certainly tell the truth, Silverbridge. I cannot say that you are bound in duty to tell the whole truth even to your father in such a matter."

"But I mean to tell you everything. Mabel did not seem to care for me much—in London. And then I saw some one,—some one I liked better." Then he stopped, but as the Duke did not ask any questions he plunged on. "It was Miss Boncassen."

"Miss Boncassen!"

"Yes, sir," said Silverbridge, with a little access of decision.

"The American young lady?"

"Yes, sir."

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"Do you know anything of her family?"

"I think I know all about her family. It is not much in the way of—family."

"You have not spoken to her about it?"

"Yes, sir;—I have settled it all with her, on condition——"

"Settled it with her that she is to be your wife!"

"Yes, sir,—on condition that you will approve."

"Did you go to her, Silverbridge, with such a stipulation as that?"

"It was not like that."

"How was it, then?"

"She stipulated. She will marry me if you will consent."

"It was she, then, who thought of my wishes and my feeling;—not you?"

"I knew that I loved her. What is a man to do when he feels like that? Of course I meant to tell you." The Duke was now looking very black. "I thought you liked her, sir."

"Liked her! I did like her. I do like her. What has that to do with it? Do you think I like none but those with whom I should think it fitting to ally myself in marriage? Is there to be no duty in such matters, no restraint, no feeling of what is due to your own name, and to others who bear it? The lad out there who is sweeping the walks can marry the first girl that pleases his eye if she will take him. Perhaps his lot is the happier because he owns such liberty. Have you the same freedom?"

"I suppose I have,—by law."

"Do you recognise no duty but what the laws impose upon you? Should you be disposed to eat and drink

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in bestial excess, because the laws would not hinder you? Should you lie and sleep all the day, the law would say nothing! Should you neglect every duty which your position imposes on you, the law could not interfere! To such a one as you the law can be no guide. You should so live as not to come near the law, —or to have the law to come near to you. From all evil against which the law bars you, you should be barred, at an infinite distance, by honour, by conscience, — and nobility. Does the law require patriotism, philanthropy, self-abnegation, public service, purity of purpose, devotion to the needs of others who have been placed in the world below you? The law is a great thing,—because men are poor and weak and bad. And it is great, because where it exists in its strength no tyrant can be above it. But between you and me there should be no mention of law as the guide of conduct. Speak to me of honour, of duty, and of nobility; and tell me what they require of you."

Silverbridge listened in silence and with something of true admiration in his heart. But he felt the strong necessity of declaring his own convictions on one special point here, at once, in this new crisis of the conversation. That accident in regard to the colour of the dean's lodge had stood in the way of his logical studies, —so that he was unable to put his argument into proper shape; but there belonged to him a certain natural astuteness which told him that he must put in his rejoinder at this particular point. "I think I am bound in honour and in duty to marry Miss Boncassen," he said. "And, if I understand what you mean, by nobility just as much."

"Because you have promised."

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"Not only for that. I have promised, and therefore I am bound. She has;—well, she has said that she loves me, and therefore of course I am bound. But it is not only that."

"What do you mean?"

"I suppose a man ought to marry the woman he loves,—if he can get her."

"No; no; not so; not always so. Do you think that love is a passion that cannot be withstood?"

"But here we are both of one mind, sir. When I saw how you seemed to take to her——"

"Take to her! Can I not interest myself in human beings without wishing to make them flesh of my flesh, bone of my bone? What am I to think of you? It was but the other day that all that you are now telling me of Miss Boncassen you were telling me of Lady Mabel Grex." Here poor Silverbridge bit his lips and shook his head, and looked down upon the ground. This was the weak part of his case. He could not tell his father the whole story about Mabel,—that she had coyed his love, so that he had been justified in thinking himself free from any claim in that direction when he had encountered the infinitely sweeter charms of Isabel Boncassen. "You are weak as water," said the unhappy father.

"I am not weak in this."

"Did you not say exactly the same about Lady Mabel?"

There was a pause, so that he was driven to reply. "I found her as I thought indifferent, and then—I changed my mind."

"Indifferent! What does she think about it now?

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Does she know of this? How does it stand between you two at the present moment?"

"She knows that I am engaged to—Miss Boncassen."

"Does she approve of it?"

"Why should I ask her, sir? I have not asked her."

"Then why did you tell her? She could not but have spoken her mind when you told her. There must have been much between you when this was talked of."

The unfortunate young man was obliged to take some time before he could answer this appeal. He had to own that his father had some justice on his side, but at the same time he could reveal nothing of Mabel's secret. "I told her because we were friends. I did not ask her approval; but she did disapprove. She thought that your son should not marry an American girl without family."

"Of course she would feel that."

"Now I have told you what she said, and I hope you will ask me no further questions about her. I cannot make Lady Mabel my wife;—though, for the matter of that, I ought not to presume that she would take me if I wished it. I had intended to ask you to-day to consent to my marriage with Miss Boncassen."

"I cannot give you my consent."

"Then I am very unhappy."

"How can I believe as to your unhappiness when you would have said the same about Lady Mabel Grex a few weeks ago?"

"Nearly eight months," said Silverbridge.

"What is the difference? It is not the time, but the disposition of the man. I cannot give you my consent.

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The young lady sees it in the right light, and that will make your escape easy."

"I do not want to escape."

"She has indicated the cause which will separate you."

"I will not be separated from her," said Silverbridge, who was beginning to feel that he was subjugated to tyranny. If he chose to marry Isabel, no one could have a right to hinder him.

"I can only hope that you will think better of it, and that when next you speak to me on that or any other subject you will answer me with less arrogance."

This rebuke was terrible to the son, whose mind at the present moment was filled with two ideas, that of constancy to Isabel Boncassen, and then of respect and affection for his father. "Indeed, sir," he said, "I am not arrogant, and if I have answered improperly I beg your pardon. But my mind is made up about this, and I thought you had better know how it is."

"I do not see that I can say anything else to you now."

"I think of going to Harrington this afternoon." Then the Duke, with further very visible annoyance, asked where Harrington was. It was explained that Harrington was Lord Chiltern's seat, Lord Chiltern being the master of the Brake hounds;—that it was his son's purpose to remain six weeks among the Brake hounds, but that he should stay only a day or two with Lord Chiltern. Then it appeared that Silverbridge intended to put himself up at a hunting inn in the neighbourhood, and the Duke did not at all like the plan. That his son should choose to live at an inn when the comforts of an English country house were

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open to him was distasteful and almost offensive to the Duke. And the matter was not improved when he was made to understand that all this was to be done for the sake of hunting. There had been the shooting in Scotland; then the racing,—ah, alas, yes,—the racing and the betting at Doncaster! Then the shooting at Matching had been made to appear to be the chief reason why he himself had been living in his own house! And now his son was going away to live at an inn in order that more time might be devoted to hunting! "Why can't you hunt here at home, if you must hunt?"

"It is all woodland," said Silverbridge.

"I thought you wanted woods. Lord Chiltern is always troubling me about Trumpeton Wood."

This breeze about the hunting enabled the son to escape without any further allusion to Miss Boncassen. He did escape, and proceeded to turn over in his mind all that had been said. His tale had been told. A great burden was thus taken off his shoulders. He could tell Isabel so much, and thus free himself from the suspicion of having been afraid to declare his purpose. She should know what he had done, and should be made to understand that he had been firm. He had, he thought, been very firm, and gave himself some credit on that head. His father, no doubt, had been firm too, but that he had expected. His father had said much. All that about honour and duty had been very good; but this was certain,—that when a young man had promised a young woman he ought to keep his word. And he thought that there were certain changes going on in the management of the world which his father did not quite understand. Fathers

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never do quite understand the changes which are manifest to their sons. Some years ago it might have been improper that an American girl should be elevated to the rank of an English duchess; but now all that was altered.

The Duke spent the rest of the day alone, and was not happy in his solitude. All that Silverbridge had told him was sad to him. He had taught himself to think that he could love Lady Mabel as an affectionate father wishes to love his son's wife. He had set himself to wish to like her, and had been successful. Being most anxious that his son should marry, he had prepared himself to be more than ordinarily liberal,—to be in every way gracious. His children were now everything to him, and among his children his son and heir was the chief. From the moment in which he had heard from Silverbridge that Lady Mabel was chosen he had given himself up to considering how he might best promote their interests,—how he might best enable them to live with that dignity and splendour which he himself had unwisely despised. That the son who was to come after him should be worthy of the place assigned to his name had been, of personal objects, the nearest to his heart. There had been failures, but still there had been left room for hope. The boy had been unfortunate at Eton;—but how many unfortunate boys had become great men! He had disgraced himself by his folly at college,—but, though some lads will be men at twenty, others are then little more than children. The fruit that ripens the soonest is seldom the best. Then had come Tifto and the racing mania. Nothing could be worse than Tifto and race-horses. But from that evil Silverbridge had seemed to be made

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free by the very disgust which the vileness of the circumstance had produced. Perhaps Tifto driving a nail into his horse's foot had on the whole been serviceable. That apostacy from the political creed of the Pallisers had been a blow,—much more felt than the loss of the £70,000;—but even under that blow he had consoled himself by thinking that a conservative patriotic nobleman may serve his country,—even as a conservative. In the midst of this he had felt that the surest resource for his son against evil would be in an early marriage. If he would marry becomingly, then might everything still be made pleasant. If his son would marry becomingly nothing which a father could do should be wanting to add splendour and dignity to his son's life.

In thinking of all this he had by no means regarded his own mode of life with favour. He knew how jejune his life had been,—how devoid of other interests than that of the public service to which he had devoted himself. He was thinking of this when he told his son that he had neither ploughed and sowed or been the owner of sheep or oxen. He often thought of this, when he heard those around him talking of the sports, which, though he condemned them as the employments of a life, he now regarded wistfully, hopelessly as far as he himself was concerned, as proper recreations for a man of wealth. Silverbridge should have it all, if he could arrange it. The one thing necessary was a fitting wife;—and the fitting wife had been absolutely chosen by Silverbridge himself.

It may be conceived, therefore, that he was again unhappy. He had already been driven to acknowledge that these children of his,—thoughtless, restless, though

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they seemed to be,—still had a will of their own. In all which how like they were to their mother! With her, however, his word, though it might be resisted, had never lost its authority. When he had declared that a thing should not be done, she had never persisted in saying that she would do it. But with his children it was otherwise. What power had he over Silverbridge,—or for the matter of that, even over his daughter? They had only to be firm and he knew that he must be conquered.

"I thought that you liked her," Silverbridge had said to him. How utterly unconscious, thought the Duke, must the young man have been of all that his position required of him when he used such an argument! Liked her! He did like her. She was clever, accomplished, beautiful, well-mannered,—as far as he knew endowed with all good quailties! Would not many an old Roman have said as much for some favourite Greek slave,—for some freedman whom he would admit to his very heart? But what old Roman ever dreamed of giving his daughter to the son of a Greek bondsman! Had he done so, what would have become of the name of a Roman citizen? And was it not his duty to fortify and maintain that higher, smaller, more precious pinnacle of rank on which fortune had placed him and his children?

Like her! Yes! he liked her certainly. He had by no means always found that he best liked the companionship of his own order. He had liked to feel around him the free battle of the House of Commons. He liked the power of attack and defence in carrying on which an English politician cares nothing for rank. He liked to remember that the son of any tradesman

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might, by his own merits, become a peer of Parliament. He would have liked to think that his son should share all these tastes with him. Yes,—he liked Isabel Boncassen. But how different was that liking from a desire that she should be bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh!

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CHAPTER IX.

THE BRAKE COUNTRY.

"WHAT does your father mean to do about Trumpeton Wood?" That was the first word from Lord Chiltern after he had shaken hands with his guest.

"Is n't it all right yet?"

"All right? No! How can a wood like that be all right without a man about the place who knows anything of the nature of a fox? In your grandfather's time——"

"My great-uncle, you mean."

"Well;—your great-uncle!—they used to trap the foxes there. There was a fellow named Fothergill who used to come there for shooting. Now it is worse than ever. Nobody shoots there because there is nothing to shoot. There is n't a keeper. Every scamp is allowed to go where he pleases, and of course there is n't a fox in the whole place. My huntsman laughs at me when I ask him to draw it." As the indignant master of the Brake hounds said this the very fire flashed from his eyes.

"My dear," said Lady Chiltern, expostulating, "Lord Silverbridge has n't been in the house above half an hour."

"What does that matter? When a thing has to be said it had better be said at once."

Phineas Finn was staying at Harrington with his intimate friends the Chilterns, as were also a certain

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Mr. and Mrs. Maule, both of whom were addicted to hunting,—the lady, whose maiden name had been Palliser, being a cousin to Lord Silverbridge. On that day also a certain Mr. and Mrs. Spooner dined at Harrington. Mr. and Mrs. Spooner were both very much given to hunting, as seemed to be necessarily the case with everybody admitted to that house. Mr. Spooner was a gentleman who might be on the wrong side of fifty, with a red nose, very vigorous, and submissive in regard to all things but port-wine. His wife was perhaps something more than half his age, a stout, hard-riding, handsome woman. She had been the penniless daughter of a retired officer,—but yet had managed to ride on whatever animal any one would lend her. Then Mr. Spooner, who had for many years been part and parcel of the Brake hunt, and who was much in want of a wife, had, luckily for her, cast his eyes upon Miss Leatherside. It was thought that upon the whole she made him a good wife. She hunted four days a week, and he could afford to keep horses for her. She never flirted, and wanted no one to open gates. Tom Spooner himself was not always so forward as he used to be; but his wife was always there and would tell him all that he did not see himself. And she was a good housewife, taking care that nothing should be spent lavishly, except upon the stable. Of him, too, and of his health, she was careful, never scrupling to say a word in season when he was likely to hurt himself, either among the fences or among the decanters. "You ain't so young as you were, Tom. Don't think of doing it." This she would say to him with a loud voice when she would find him pausing at a fence. Then she would hop over herself and he would go

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round. She was "quite a providence to him," as her mother, old Mrs. Leatherside, would say.

She was hardly the woman that one would have expected to meet as a friend in the drawing-room of Lady Chiltern. Lord Chiltern was perhaps a little rough, but Lady Chiltern was all that a mother, a wife, and a lady ought to be. She probably felt that some little apology had to be made for Mrs. Spooner. "I hope you like hunting," she said to Silverbridge.

"Best of all things," said he enthusiastically.

"Because you know this is Castle Nimrod, in which nothing is allowed to interfere with the one great business of life."

"It 's like that, is it?"

"Quite like that. Lord Chiltern has taken up hunting as a duty in life, and he does it with his might and main. Not to get a good day is a misery to him;—not for himself but because he feels that he is responsible. We had one blank day last year, and I thought that he never would recover it. It was that unfortunate Trumpeton Wood."

"How he will hate me."

"Not if you will praise the hounds judiciously. And then there is a Mr. Spooner coming here to-night. He is the first-lieutenant. He understands all about the foxes, and all about the farmers. He has got a wife."

"Does she understand anything?"

"She understands him. She is coming, too. They have not been married long, and he never goes anywhere without her."

"Does she ride?"

"Well; yes. I never go out myself now, because I

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have so much of it all at home. But I fancy she does ride a good deal. She will talk hunting, too. If Chiltern were to leave the country I think they ought to make her master. Perhaps you 'll think her rather odd; but really she is a very good woman."

"I am sure I shall like her."

"I hope you will. You know Mr. Finn. He is here. He and my husband are very old friends. And Adelaide Maule is your cousin. She hunts, too. And so does Mr. Maule,—only not quite so energetically. I think that is all we shall have."

Immediately after that all the guests came in at once, and a discussion was heard as they were passing through the hall. "No;—that was n't it," said Mrs. Spooner loudly. "I don't care what Dick said." Dick Rabbit was the first whip, and seemed to have been much exercised with the matter now under dispute. "The fox never went into Grobby Gorse at all. I was there and saw Sappho give him a line down the bank."

"I think he must have gone into the gorse, my dear," said her husband. "The earth was open, you know."

"I tell you she did n't. You were n't there, and you can't know. I 'm sure it was a vixen by her running. We ought to have killed that fox, my lord." Then Mrs. Spooner made her obeisance to her hostess. Perhaps she was rather slow in doing this, but the greatness of the subject had been the cause. These are matters so important, that the ordinary civilities of the world should not stand in their way.

"What do you say, Chiltern?" asked the husband.

"I say that Mrs. Spooner is n't very often wrong, and that Dick Rabbit is n't very often right about a fox."

"It was a pretty run," said Phineas.

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"Just thirty-four minutes," said Mr. Spooner.

"Thirty-two up to Grobby Gorse," asserted Mrs. Spooner. "The hounds never hunted a yard after that. Dick hurried them into the gorse, and the old hound would n't stick to his line when she found that no one believed her."

This was on a Monday evening, and the Brake hounds went out generally five days a week. "You 'll hunt to-morrow, I suppose," Lady Chiltern said to Silverbridge.

"I hope so."

"You must hunt to-morrow. Indeed there is nothing else to do. Chiltern has taken such a dislike to shooting-men that he won't shoot pheasants himself. We don't hunt on Wednesdays or Sundays, and then everybody lies in bed. Here is Mr. Maule, he lies in bed on other mornings as well, and spends the rest of his day riding about the country looking for the hounds."

"Does he ever find them?"

"What did become of you all to-day?" said Mr. Maule, as he took his place at the dinner-table. "You can't have drawn any of the coverts regularly."

"Then we found our foxes without drawing them," said the master.

"We chopped one at Bromleys," said Mr. Spooner.

"I went there."

"Then you ought to have known better," said Mrs. Spooner. "When a man loses the hounds in that country he ought to go direct to Brachett's Wood. If you had come on to Brachett's, you 'd have seen as good a thirty-two minutes as ever you wished to ride." When the ladies went out of the room Mrs. Spooner

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gave a parting word of advice to her husband, and to the host. "Now, Tom, don't you drink port-wine. Lord Chiltern, look after him, and don't let him have port-wine."

Then there began an altogether different phase of hunting conversation. As long as the ladies were there it was all very well to talk of hunting as an amusement, good sport, a thirty minutes or so, the delight of having a friend in a ditch, or the glory of a stiff-built rail were fitting subjects for a lighter hour. But now the business of the night was to begin. The difficulties, the enmities, the precautions, the resolutions, the resources of the Brake hunt were to be discussed. And from thence the conversation of these devotees strayed away to the perils at large to which hunting in these modern days is subjected;—not the perils of broken necks and crushed ribs, which can be reduced to an average, and so an end made of that small matter; but the perils from outsiders, the perils from new-fangled prejudices, the perils from more modern sports, the perils from over-cultivation, the perils from extended population, the perils from increasing railroads, the perils from literary ignorances, the perils from intruding cads, the perils from indifferent magnates,—the Duke of Omnium, for instance;—and that peril of perils, the peril of decrease of funds and increase of expenditure! The jaunty gentleman who puts on his dainty breeches and his pair of boots, and on his single horse rides out on a pleasant morning to some neighbouring meet, thinking himself a sportsman, has but a faint idea of the troubles which a few staunch workmen endure in order that he may not be made to think that his boots, and his breeches, and his horse, have not been in vain.

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A word or two further was at first said about that unfortunate wood for which Silverbridge at the present felt himself responsible. Finn said that he was sure the Duke would look to it, if Silverbridge would mention it. Chiltern simply groaned. Silverbridge said nothing, remembering how many troubles he had on hand at this moment. Then by degrees their solicitude worked itself round to the cares of a neighbouring hunt. The A. R. U. had lost their master. One Captain Glomax was going, and the county had been driven to the necessity of advertising for a successor. "When hunting comes to that," said Lord Chiltern, "one begins to think that it is in a bad way." It may always be observed that when hunting men speak seriously of their sport, they speak despondingly. Everything is going wrong. Perhaps the same thing may be remarked in other pursuits. Farmers are generally on the verge of ruin. Trade is always bad. The Church is in danger. The House of Lords is n't worth a dozen years' purchase. The throne totters.

"An itinerant master with a carpet-bag never can carry on a country," said Mr. Spooner.

"You ought really to have a gentleman of property in the county," said Lord Chiltern, in a self-deprecating tone. His father's acres lay elsewhere.

"It should be some one who has a real stake in the country," replied Mr. Spooner,—"whom the farmers can respect. Glomax understood hunting, no doubt, but the farmers did n't care for him. If you don't have the farmers with you, you can't have hunting." Then he filled a glass of port.

"If you don't approve of Glomax, what do you think of a man like Major Tifto?" asked Mr. Maule.

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"That was in the Runnymede," said Spooner contemptuously.

"Who is Major Tifto?" asked Lord Chiltern.

"He is the man," said Silverbridge boldly, "who owned Prime Minister with me, when he did n't win the Leger last September."

"There was a deuce of a row," said Maule. Then Mr. Spooner, who read his Bell's Life and Field very religiously, and who never missed an article in Bayley's proceeded to give them an account of everything that had taken place in the Runnymede hunt. It mattered but little that he was wrong in all his details. Narrations always are. The result to which he came was nearly right when he declared that the Major had been turned off, that a committee had been appointed, and that Messrs. Topps and Jawstock had been threatened with a lawsuit.

"That comes," said Lord Chiltern solemnly, "of employing men like Major Tifto in places for which they are radically unfit. I dare say Major Tifto knew how to handle a pack of hounds,—perhaps almost as well as my huntsman, Fowler. But I don't think a county would get on very well which appointed Fowler master of hounds. He is an honest man, and therefore would be better than Tifto. But—it would not do. It is a position in which a man should at any rate be a gentleman. If he be not, all those who should be concerned in maintaining the hunt will turn their backs upon him. When I take my hounds over this man's ground and that man's ground, certainly without doing him any good, I have to think of a great many things. I have to understand that those whom I cannot compensate by money I have to compensate

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by courtesy. When I shake hands with a farmer and express my obligation to him because he does not lock his gates, he is gratified I don't think any decent farmer would care much for shaking hands with Major Tifto. If we fall into that kind of thing there must soon be an end of hunting. Major Tiftos are cheap, no doubt; but in hunting, as in most other things, cheap and nasty go together. If men don't choose to put their hands in their pockets they had better say so, and give the thing up altogether. If you won't take any more wine, we 'll go to the ladies. Silverbridge, the trap will start from the door to-morrow morning precisely at 9.30 A.M. Grantingham Cross is fourteen miles." Then they all left their chairs,—but as they did so Mr. Spooner finished the bottle of port-wine.

"I never heard Chiltern speak so much like a book before," said Spooner to his wife as she drove him home that night.

The next morning everybody was ready for a start at half-past nine except Mr. Maule,—as to whom his wife declared that she had left him in bed when she came down to breakfast. "He can never get there if we don't take him," said Lord Chiltern, who was in truth the most good-natured man in the world. Five minutes were allowed him, and then he came down with a large sandwich in one hand and a button-hook in the other, with which he was prepared to complete his toilet. "What the deuce makes you always in such a hurry?" was the first word he spoke as Lord Chiltern got on to the box. The master knew him too well to argue the point. "Well;—he always is in a hurry," said the sinner, when his wife accused him of ingratitude.

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"Where 's Spooner?" asked the master, when he saw Mrs. Spooner without her husband at the meet.

"I knew how it would be when I saw the port-wine," she said in a whisper that could be heard all round. "He has got it this time sharp,—in his great toe. We shan't find at Grantingham. They were cutting wood there last week. If I were you, my lord, I 'd go away to the Spinnies at once."

"I must draw the country regularly," muttered the master.

The country was drawn regularly, but in vain, till about two o'clock. Not only was there no fox at Grantingham Wood, but none even at the Spinnies. And at two Fowler, with an anxious face, held a consultation with his more anxious master. Trumpeton Wood lay on their right, and that no doubt would have been the proper draw. "I suppose we must try it," said Lord Chiltern.

Old Fowler looked very sour. "You might as well look for a fox under my wife's bed, my lord."

"I dare say we should find one there," said one of the wags of the hunt. Fowler shook his head, feeling that this was no time for joking.

"It ought to be drawn," said Chiltern.

"Of course you know best, my lord. I would n't touch it,—never no more. Let 'em all know what the Duke's wood is."

"This is Lord Silverbridge, the Duke's son," said Chiltern, laughing.

"I beg your lordship's pardon," said Fowler, taking off his cap. "We shall have a good time coming, some day. Let me trot 'em off to Michaelmas Daisies, my lord. I 'll be there in thirty minutes." In the neigh-

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bouring parish of St. Michael de Dezier there was a favourite little gorse which among hunting men had acquired this unreasonable name. After a little consideration the master yielded, and away they trotted.

"You'll cross the ford, Fowler?" asked Mrs. Spooner.

"Oh yes, ma'am; we could n't draw the Daisies this afternoon if we did n't."

"It 'll be up to the horses' bellies."

"Those who don't like it can go round."

"They 'd never be there in time, Fowler."

"There 's a many, ma'am, as don't mind that. You won't be one to stay behind." The water was up to the horses' bellies, but, nevertheless, Mrs. Spooner was at the gorse side when the Daisies were drawn.

They found and were away in a minute. It was all done so quickly that Fowler, who had alone gone into the gorse, had hardly time to get out with his hounds. The fox ran right back, as though he were making for the Duke's pernicious wood. In the first field or two there was a succession of gates, and there was not much to do in the way of jumping. Then the fox, keeping straight ahead, deviated from the line by which they had come, making for the brook by a more direct course. The ruck of the horsemen, understanding the matter very well, left the hounds, and went to the right, riding for the ford. The ford was of such a nature that but one horse could pass it at a time, and that one had to scramble through deep mud. "There 'll be the devil to pay there," said Lord Chiltern, going straight with his hounds. Phineas Finn and Dick Rabbit were close after him. Old Fowler had craftily gone to the ford; but Mrs. Spooner, who did not intend to be shaken off, followed the master, and close with her was

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Lord Silverbridge. "Lord Chiltern has n't got it right," she said. "He can't do it among these bushes." As she spoke the master put his horse at the bushes and then—disappeared. The lady had been right. There was no ground at that spot to take off from, and the bushes had impeded him. Lord Chiltern got over, but his horse was in the water. Dick Rabbit and poor Phineas Finn were stopped in their course by the necessity of helping the master in his trouble.

But Mrs. Spooner, the judicious Mrs. Spooner, rode at the stream where it was, indeed, a little wider, but at a place in which the horse could see what he was about, and where he could jump from and to firm ground. Lord Silverbridge followed her gallantly. They both jumped the brook well, and then were together. "You 'll beat me in pace," said the lady as he rode up alongside of her. "Take the fence ahead straight, and then turn sharp to your right." With all her faults Mrs. Spooner was a thorough sportsman.

He did take the fence ahead,—or rather tried to do so. It was a bank and a double ditch,—not very great in itself, but requiring a horse to land on the top and go off with a second spring. Our young friend's nag, not quite understanding the nature of the impediment, endeavoured to "swallow it whole," as hard-riding men say, and came down in the further ditch. Silverbridge came down on his head, but the horse pursued his course,—across a heavily ploughed field.

This was very disagreeable. He was not in the least hurt, but it became his duty to run after his horse. A very few furrows of that work suffice to make a man think that hunting altogether is a "beastly sort of thing." Mrs. Spooner's horse, who had shown himself to be a

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little less quick of foot than his own, had known all about the bank and the double ditch, and had, apparently of his own accord, turned down to the right, either seeing or hearing the hounds, and knowing that the ploughed ground was to be avoided. But his rider soon changed his course. She went straight after the riderless horse, and when Silverbridge had reduced himself to utter speechlessness by his exertions, brought him back his steed.

"I am—I am—I am—so sorry," he struggled to say, —and then as she held his horse for him he struggled up into the saddle.

"Keep down this furrow," said Mrs. Spooner, "and we shall be with them in the second field. There 's nobody near them yet."

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CHAPTER X.

"I 'VE SEEN 'EM LIKE THAT BEFORE."

On this occasion Silverbridge stayed only a few days at Harrington, having promised Tregear to entertain him at The Baldfaced Stag. It was here that his horses were standing, and he now intended, by limiting himself to one horse a day, to mount his friend for a couple of weeks. It was settled at last that Tregear should ride his friend's horse one day, hire the next, and so on. "I wonder what you 'll think of Mrs. Spooner?" he said.

"Why should I think anything of her?"

"Because I doubt whether you ever saw such a woman before. She does nothing but hunt."

"Then I certainly shan't want to see her again."

"And she talks as I never heard a lady talk before."

"Then I don't care if I never see her at all."

"But she is the most plucky and most good-natured human being I ever saw in my life. After all, hunting is very good fun."

"Very; if you don't do it so often as to be sick of it."

"Long as I have known you I don't think I ever saw you ride yet."

"We used to have hunting down in Cornwall, and thought we did it pretty well. And I have ridden in South Wales, which I can assure you is n't an easy thing to do. But you must n't expect much from me."

They were both out the Monday and Tuesday in

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that week, and then again on the Thursday without anything special in the way of sport. Lord Chiltern, who had found Silverbridge to be a young man after his own heart, was anxious that he should come back to Harrington and bring Tregear with him. But to this Tregear would not assent, alleging that he should feel himself to be a burden both to Lord and Lady Chiltern. On the Friday Tregear did not go out, saying that he would avoid the expense, and on that day there was a good run. "It is always the way," said Silverbridge. "If you miss a day, it is sure to be the best thing of the season. An hour and a quarter with hardly anything you could call a check! It is the only very good thing I have seen since I have been here. Mrs. Spooner was with them all through."

"And I suppose you were with Mrs. Spooner."

"I was n't far off. I wish you had been there."

On the next day the meet was at the kennels, close to Harrington, and Silverbridge drove his friend over in a gig. The master and Lady Chiltern, Spooner and Mrs. Spooner, Maule and Mrs. Maule, Phineas Finn, and a host of others condoled with the unfortunate young man because he had not seen the good thing yesterday. "We 've had it a little faster once or twice," said Mrs. Spooner with deliberation, "but never for so long. Then it was straight as a line, and a real open kill. No changing, you know. We did go through the Daisies, but I 'll swear to its being the same fox." All of which set Tregear wondering. How could she swear to her fox? And if they had changed, what did it matter? And if it had been a little crooked, why would it have been less enjoyable? And was she really so exact a judge of pace as she pretended to be?

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"I 'm afraid we shan't have anything like that to-day," she continued. "The wind 's in the west, and I never do like a westerly wind."

"A little to the north," said her husband, looking round the compass.

"My dear," said the lady, "you never know where the wind comes from. Now don't you think of taking off your comforter. I won't have it."

Tregear was riding his friend's favourite hunter, a thoroughbred bay horse, very much more than up to his rider's weight, and supposed to be peculiarly good at timber, water, or any well-defined kind of fence, however high or however broad. They found at a covert near the kennels, and killed their fox after a burst of a few minutes. They found again, and having lost their fox, all declared that there was not a yard of scent. "I always know what a west wind means," said Mrs. Spooner.

Then they lunched, and smoked, and trotted about with an apparent acknowledgment that there was n't much to be done. It was not right that they should expect much after so good a thing as they had had yesterday. At half-past two Mr. Spooner had been sent home by his providence, and Mrs. Spooner was calculating that she would be able to ride her horse again on the Tuesday. When on a sudden the hounds were on a fox. It turned out afterwards that Dick Rabbit had absolutely ridden him up among the stubble, and that the hounds had nearly killed him before he had gone a yard. But the astute animal making the best use of his legs till he could get the advantage of the first ditch, ran, and crept, and jumped absolutely through the pack. Then there was shouting, and yell-

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ing, and riding. The men who were idly smoking threw away their cigars. Those who were loitering at a distance lost their chance. But the real sportsmen, always on the alert, always thinking of the business in hand, aways mindful that there may be at any moment a fox just before the hounds, had a glorious opportunity of getting "well away." Among these no one was more intent, or, when the moment came, "better away" than Mrs. Spooner.

Silverbridge had been talking to her and had the full advantage of her care. Tregear was riding behind with Lord Chiltern, who had been pressing him to come with his friend to Harrington. As soon as the shouting was heard Chiltern was off like a rocket. It was not only that he was anxious to "get well away," but that a sense of duty compelled him to see how the thing was being done. Old Fowler certainly was a little slow, and Dick Rabbit, with the true bloody-minded instinct of a whip, was a little apt to bustle a fox back into covert. And then, when a run commences with a fast rush, riders are apt to over-ride the hounds, and then the hounds will over-run the fox. All of which has to be seen to by a master who knows his business.

Tregear followed, and being mounted on a fast horse was soon as forward as a judicious rider would desire. "Now, Runks, don't you press on and spoil it all," said Mrs. Spooner to the hard-riding objectionable son of old Runks the vet, from Rufford. But young Runks did press on till the master spoke a word. The word shall not be repeated, but it was efficacious.

At that moment there had been a check,—as there is generally after a short spurt, when fox, hounds, and horsemen get off together, and not always in the order

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in which they have been placed here. There is too much bustle, and the pack becomes disconcerted. But it enabled Fowler to get up, and by dint of growling at the men and conciliating his hounds, he soon picked up the scent. "If they 'd all stand still for two minutes and be —— to them," he muttered aloud to himself "they 'd 'ave some'at to ride arter. They might go then and there 's some of 'em 'd soon be nowhere."

But in spite of Fowler's denunciations there was, of course, another rush. Runks had slunk away, but by making a little distance was now again ahead of the hounds. And unfortunately there were half-a-dozen with him. Lord Chiltern was very wrath. "When he 's like that," said Mrs. Spooner to Tregear, "it 's always well to give him a wide berth." But as the hounds were now running fast it was necessary that even in taking the precaution due regard should be had to the fox's line. "He 's back for Harrington bushes," said Mrs. Spooner. And as she said so, she rode at a bank, with a rail at the top of it perhaps a foot and a half high, with a deep drop into the field beyond. It was not a very nice place, but it was apparently the only available spot in the fence. She seemed to know it well, for as she got close to it she brought her horse almost to a stand and so took it. The horse cleared the rail, seemed just to touch the bank on the other side, while she threw herself back almost on to his crupper, and so came down with perfect ease. But she, knowing that it would not be easy to all horses, paused a moment to see what would happen.

Tregear was next to her and was intending to "fly" the fence. But when he saw Mrs. Spooner pull her horse and pause, he also had to pull his horse. This

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he did so as to enable her to take her leap without danger or encumbrance from him, but hardly so as to bring his horse to the bank in the same way. It may be doubted whether the animal he was riding would have known enough and been quiet enough to have performed the acrobatic manœuvre which had carried Mrs. Spooner so pleasantly over the peril. He had some idea of this, for the thought occurred to him that he would turn and ride fast at the jump. But before he could turn he saw that Silverbridge was pressing on him. It was thus his only resource to do as Mrs. Spooner had done. He was too close to the rail but still he tried it. The horse attempted to jump, caught his foot against the bar, and of course went over head-foremost. This probably would have been nothing, had not Silverbridge with his rushing beast been immediately after them. When the young lord saw that his friend was down it was too late for him to stop his course. His horse was determined to have the fence, —and did have it. He touched nothing, and would have skimmed in glory over the next field had he not come right down on Tregear and Tregear's steed. There they were, four of them, two men and two horses in one confused heap.

The first person with them was Mrs. Spooner, who was off her horse in a minute. And Silverbridge too was very soon on his legs; he at any rate was unhurt, and the two horses were up before Mrs. Spooner was out of her saddle. But Tregear did not move. "What are we to do?" said Lord Silverbridge, kneeling down over his friend. "Oh, Mrs. Spooner, what are we to do?"

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The hunt had passed on and no one else was immediately with them. But at this moment Dick Rabbit, who had been left behind to bring up his hounds, appeared above the bank. "Leave your horse and come down," said Mrs. Spooner. "Here is a gentleman who has hurt himself." Dick would n't leave his horse, but was soon on the scene, having found his way through another part of the fence.

"No; he ain't dead," said Dick—"I 've seen 'em like that before, and they wur n't dead. But he 's had a hawful squeege." Then he passed his hand over the man's neck and chest. "There 's a lot of 'em is broke," said he. "We must get him into farmer Tooby's."

After a while he was got into farmer Tooby's, when that surgeon came who is always in attendance on a hunting-field. The surgeon declared that he had broken his collar-bone, two of his ribs, and his left arm. And then one of the animals had struck him on the chest as he raised himself. A little brandy was poured down his throat, but even under that operation he gave no sign of life. "No, missis, he are n't dead," said Dick to Mrs. Tooby; "no more he won't die this bout; but he 's got it very nasty."

That night Silverbridge was sitting by his friend's bedside at ten o'clock in Lord Chiltern's house. Tregear had spoken a few words, and the bones had been set. But the doctor had not felt himself justified in speaking with that assurance which Dick had expressed. The man's whole body had been bruised by the horse which had fallen on him. The agony of Silverbridge was extreme, for he knew that it had been his doing.

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"You were a little too close," Mrs. Spooner had said to him, "but nobody saw it, and we 'll hold our tongues." Silverbridge, however, would not hold his tongue. He told everybody how it had happened, how he had been unable to stop his horse, how he had jumped upon his friend, and perhaps killed him. "I don't know what I am to do. I am so miserable," he said to Lady Chiltern with the tears running down his face.

The two remained at Harrington and their luggage was brought over from The Baldfaced Stag. The accident had happened on a Saturday. On the Sunday there was no comfort. On the Monday the patient's recollection and mind were re-established, and the doctor thought that perhaps, with great care, his constitution would pull him through. On that day the consternation at Harrington was so great that Mrs. Spooner would not go to the meet. She came over from Spoon Hall, and spent a considerable part of the day in the sick man's room. "It 's sure to come right if it 's above the vitals," she said, expressing an opinion which had come from much experience. "That is," she added, "unless the neck's broke. When poor old Jack Stubbs drove his head into his tap and dislocated his wertebury, of course it was all up with him." The patient heard this and was seen to smile.

On the Tuesday there arose the question of family communication. As the accident would make its way into the papers a message had been sent to Polwenning to say that various bones had been broken, but that the patient was upon the whole doing well. Then there had been different messages backwards and forwards, in all of which there had been an attempt to comfort old Mrs. Tregear. But on the Tuesday letters were

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written. Silverbridge, sitting in his friend's room, sent a long account of the accident to Mrs. Tregear, giving a list of the injuries done.

"Your sister," whispered the poor fellow from his pillow.

"Yes,—yes;—yes, I will."

"And Mabel Grex." Silverbridge nodded assent and again went to the writing-table. He did write to his sister, and in plain words told her everything. "The doctor says he is not now in danger." Then he added a postscript. "As long as I am here I will let you know how he is."

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CHAPTER XI.

"I PELIEVE HIM TO BE A WORTHY YOUNG MAN."

LADY MARY and Mrs. Finn were alone when the tidings came from Silverbridge. The Duke had been absent, having gone to spend an unpleasant week in Barsetshire. Mary had taken the opportunity of his absence to discuss her own prospects at full length. "My dear," said Mrs. Finn, "I will not express an opinion. How can I after all that has passed? I have told the Duke the same. I cannot be heart and hand with either without being false to the other." But still Lady Mary continued to talk about Tregear.

"I don't think papa has a right to treat me in this way," she said. "He would n't be allowed to kill me, and this is killing me."

"While there is life there is hope," said Mrs. Finn.

"Yes; while there is life there is hope. But one does n't want to grow old first."

"There is no danger of that yet, Mary."

"I feel very old. What is the use of life without something to make it sweet? I am not even allowed to hear anything that he is doing. If he were to ask me, I think I would go away with him to-morrow."

"He would not be foolish enough for that."

"Because he does not suffer as I do. He has his borough, and his public life, and a hundred things to think of. I have got nothing but him. I know he is true;—quite as true as I am. But it is I that have the

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suffering in all this. A man can never be like a girl. Papa ought not to make me suffer like this."

That took place on the Monday. On the Tuesday Mrs. Finn received a letter from her husband giving his account of the accident. "As far as I can learn," he said, "Silverbridge will write about it to-morrow." Then he went on to give a by no means good account of the state of the patient. The doctor had declared him to be out of immediate danger, and had set the broken bones. As tidings would be sent on the next day she had better say nothing about the accident to Lady Mary. This letter reached Matching on Tuesday and made the position of Mrs. Finn very disagreeable. She was bound to carry herself as though nothing was amiss, knowing as she did so, the condition of Mary's lover.

On the evening of that day Lady Mary was more lively than usual, though her liveliness was hardly of a happy nature. "I don't know what papa can expect. I've heard him say a hundred times that to be in Parliament is the highest place a gentleman can fill, and now Frank is in Parliament." Mrs. Finn looked at her with beseeching eyes, as though begging her not to speak of Tregear. "And then to think of their having that Lord Popplecourt there! I shall always hate Lady Cantrip, for it was her place. That she should have thought it possible! Lord Popplecourt! Such a creature. Hyperion to a satyr. Is n't it true? Oh, that papa should have thought it possible!" Then she got up, and walked about the room, beating her hands together. All this time Mrs. Finn knew that Tregear was lying at Harrington with half his bones broken, and in danger of his life!

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On the next morning Lady Mary received her letters. There were two lying before her plate when she came in to breakfast, one from her father and the other from Silverbridge. She read that from the Duke first while Mrs. Finn was watching her. "Papa will be home on Saturday," she said. "He declares that the people in the borough are quite delighted with Silverbridge for a member. And he is quite jocose. 'They used to be delighted with me once,' he says, 'but I suppose everybody changes.'" Then she began to pour out the tea before she opened her brother's letter. Mrs. Finn's eyes were still on her anxiously. "I wonder what Silverbridge has got to say about the Brake Hunt." Then she opened her letter.

"Oh;—oh!" she exclaimed,—"Frank has killed himself."

"Killed himself! Not that. It is not so bad as that."

"You had heard it before."

"How is he, Mary?"

"Oh, heavens! I cannot read it. Do you read it. Tell me all. Tell me the truth. What am I to do? Where shall I go?" Then she threw up her hands, and with a loud scream fell on her knees with her head upon the chair. In the next moment Mrs. Finn was down beside her on the floor. "Read it; why do you not read it. If you will not read it, give it to me."

Mrs. Finn did read the letter, which was very short, but still giving by no means an unfavourable account of the patient. "I am sorry to say he has broken ever so many bones, and we were very much frightened about him." Then the writer went into details, from which a reader who did not read the words care-

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fully might well imagine that the man's life was still in danger.

Mrs. Finn did read it all, and did her best to comfort her friend. "It has been a bad accident," she said, "but it is clear that he is getting better. Men do so often break their bones, and then seem to think nothing of it afterwards."

"Silverbridge says it was his fault. What does he mean?"

"I suppose he was riding too close to Mr. Tregear, and that they came down together. Of course it is distressing, but I do not think you need make yourself positively unhappy about it."

"Would not you be unhappy if it were Mr. Finn?" said Mary, jumping up from her knees. "I shall go to him. I should go mad if I were to remain here and know nothing about it but what Silverbridge will tell me."

"I will telegraph to Mr. Finn."

"Mr. Finn won't care. Men are so heartless. They write about each other just as though it did not signify in the least whether anybody were dead or alive. I shall go to him."

"You cannot do that."

"I don't care now what anybody may think. I choose to be considered as belonging to him, and if papa were here I would say the same." It was of course not difficult to make her understand that she could not go to Harrington, but it was by no means easy to keep her tranquil. She would send a telegram herself. This was debated for a long time, till at last Lady Mary insisted that she was not subject to Mrs. Finn's authority. "If papa were here, even then I

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would send it." And she did send it, in her own name, regardless of the fact pointed out to her by Mrs. Finn, that the people at the post-office would thus know her secret. "It is no secret," she said. "I don't want it to be a secret." The telegram went in the following words. "I have heard it. I am so wretched. Send me one word to say how you are." She got an answer back, with Tregear's own name to it, on that afternoon. "Do not be unhappy. I am doing well. Silverbridge is with me."

On the Thursday Gerald came home from Scotland. He had arranged his little affair with Lord Percival, not, however, without some difficulty. Lord Percival had declared he did not understand I. O. U.'s in an affair of that kind. He had always thought that gentlemen did not play for stakes which they could not pay at once. This was not said to Gerald himself;—or the result would have been calamitous. Nidderdale was the go-between, and at last arranged it,—not, however, till he had pointed out that Percival having won so large a sum of money from a lad under twenty-one years of age was very lucky in receiving substantial security for its payment.

Gerald had chosen the period of his father's absence for his return. It was necessary that the story of the gambling debt should be told the Duke in February! Silverbridge had explained that to him, and he had quite understood it. He, indeed, would be up at Oxford in February, and, in that case, the first horror of the thing would be left to poor Silverbridge! Thinking of this, Gerald felt that he was bound to tell his father himself. He resolved that he would do so, but was anxious to postpone the evil day. He lingered,

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therefore, in Scotland till he knew that his father was in Barsetshire.

On his arrival he was told of Tregear's accident. "Oh Gerald; have you heard?" said his sister. He had not as yet heard, and then the history was repeated to him. Mary did not attempt to conceal her own feelings. She was as open with her brother as she had been with Mrs. Finn.

"I suppose he 'll get over it," said Gerald.

"Is that all you say?" she asked.

"What can I say better? I suppose he will. Fellows always do get over that kind of thing. Herbert De Burgh smashed both his thighs, and now he can move about again,—of course with crutches."

"Gerald! How can you be so unfeeling!"

"I don't know what you mean. I always liked Tregear, and I am very sorry for him. If you would take it a little quieter, I think it would be better."

"I could not take it quietly. How can I take it quietly when he is more than all the world to me?"

"You should keep that to yourself."

"Yes,—and so let people think that I did n't care, till I broke my heart! I shall say just the same to papa when he comes home." After that the brother and sister were not on very good terms with each other for the remainder of the day.

On the Saturday there was a letter from Silverbridge to Mrs. Finn. Tregear was better; but was unhappy because it had been decided that he could not be moved for the next month. This entailed two misfortunes on him;—first, that of being the enforced guest of persons who were not,—or hitherto had not been his own friends,—and then his absence from the first

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meeting of Parliament. When a gentleman has been in Parliament some years he may be able to reconcile himself to an obligatory vacation with a calm mind. But when the honours and glory are new, and the tedium of the benches has not yet been experienced, then such an accident is felt to be a grievance. But the young member was out of danger, and was, as Silverbridge declared, in the very best quarters which could be provided for a man in such a position.

Phineas Finn told him all the politics; Mrs. Spooner related to him, on Sundays and Wednesdays, all the hunting details; while Lady Chiltern read to him light literature, because he was not allowed to hold a book in his hand. "I wish it were me," said Gerald. "I wish I were there to read to him," said Mary.

Then the Duke came home. "Mary," said he, "I have been distressed to hear of this accident." This seemed to her to be the kindest word she had heard from him for a long time. "I believe him to be a worthy young man. I am sorry that he should be the cause of so much sorrow to you—and to me."

"Of course I was sorry for his accident," she replied, after pausing awhile; "but now that he is better I will not call him a cause of sorrow—to me." Then the Duke said nothing further about Tregear; nor did she.

"So you have come at last," he said to Gerald. That was the first greeting,—to which the son responded by an awkward smile. But in the course of the evening he walked straight up to his father—"I have something to tell you, sir," said he.

"Something to tell me?"

"Something that will make you very angry."

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CHAPTER XII.

"DO YOU EVER THINK WHAT MONEY IS?"

GERALD told his story, standing bolt upright, and looking his father full in the face as he told it. "You lost £3,400 at one sitting to Lord Percival—at cards!"

"Yes, sir."

"In Lord Nidderdale's house."

"Yes, sir. Nidderdale was n't playing. It was n't his fault."

"Who were playing?"

"Percival, and Dolly Longstaff, and Jack Hinde,—and I. Popplecourt was playing at first."

"Lord Popplecourt!"

"Yes, sir. But he went away when he began to lose."

"Three thousand four hundred pounds! How old are you?"

"I am just twenty-one."

"You are beginning the world well, Gerald! What is the engagement which Silverbridge has made with Lord Percival?"

"To pay him the money at the end of next month."

"What had Silverbridge to do with it?"

"Nothing, sir. I wrote to Silverbridge because I did n't know what to do. I knew he would stand to me."

"Who is to stand to either of you if you go on thus I do not know." To this Gerald of course made no

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reply, but an idea came across his mind that he knew who would stand both to himself and his brother.

"How did Silverbridge mean to get the money?"

"He said he would ask you. But I thought that I ought to tell you."

"Is that all?"

"All what, sir?"

"Are there other debts?" To this Gerald made no reply. "Other gambling debts?"

"No, sir;—not a shilling of that kind. I have never played before."

"Does it ever occur to you that going on at that rate you may very soon lose all the fortune that will ever come to you? You were not yet of age and you lost £3,400 at cards to a man whom you probably knew to be a professed gambler!" The Duke seemed to wait for a reply, but poor Gerald had not a word to say. "Can you explain to me what benefit you proposed to yourself when you played for such stakes as that?"

"I hoped to win back what I had lost."

"Facilis descensus Averni!" said the Duke, shaking his head. "Noctes atque dies patet atri janua Ditis." No doubt he thought, that as his son was at Oxford, admonitions in Latin would serve him better than in his native tongue. But Gerald, when he heard the grand hexameter rolled out in his father's grandest tone, entertained a comfortable feeling that the worst of the interview was over. "Win back what you had lost! Do you think that that is the common fortune of young gamblers when they fall among those who are more experienced than themselves?"

"One goes on, sir, without reflecting."

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"Go on without reflecting! Yes; and where to? where to? Oh Gerald, where to? Whither will such progress without reflection take you?" "He means—to the devil," the lad said inwardly to himself, without moving his lips. "There is but one goal for such going on as that. I can pay £3,400 for you certainly. I think it hard that I should have to do so; but I can do it,—and I will do it."

"Thank you, sir," murmured Gerald.

"But how can I wash your young mind clean from the foul stain which has already defiled it? Why did you sit down to play? Was it to win the money which these men had in their pockets?"

"Not particularly."

"It cannot be that a rational being should consent to risk the money he has himself,—to risk even the money which he has not himself,—without a desire to win that which as yet belongs to his opponents. You desired to win."

"I suppose I did hope to win."

"And why? Why did you want to extract their property from their pockets, and to put it into your own? That the footpad on the road should have such desire when, with his pistol, he stops the traveller on his journey we all understand. And we know what we think of the footpad,—and what we do to him. He is a poor creature, who from his youth upwards has had no good thing done for him, uneducated, an outcast, whom we should pity more than we despise him. We take him as a pest which we cannot endure, and lock him up where he can harm us no more. On my word, Gerald, I think that the so-called gentleman who sits down with the deliberate intention of extracting

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money from the pockets of his antagonists, who lays out for himself that way of repairing the shortcomings of fortune, who looks to that resource as an aid to his means,—is worse, much worse, than the public robber! He is meaner, more cowardly, and has I think in his bosom less of the feelings of an honest man. And he probably has been educated,—as you have been. He calls himself a gentleman. He should know black from white. It is considered terrible to cheat at cards."

"There was nothing of that, sir."

"The man who plays and cheats has fallen low indeed."

"I understand that, sir."

"He who plays that he may make an income, but does not cheat, has fallen nearly as low. Do you ever think what money is?"

The Duke paused so long, collecting his own thoughts and thinking of his own words, that Gerald found himself obliged to answer. "Cheques, and sovereigns, and bank-notes," he replied with much hesitation.

"Money is the reward of labour," said the Duke, "or rather, in the shape it reaches you, it is your representation of that reward. You may earn it yourself, or, as is, I am afraid, more likely to be the case with you, you may possess it honestly as prepared for you by the labour of others who have stored it up for you. But it is a commodity of which you are bound to see that the source is not only clean but noble. You would not let Lord Percival give you money."

"He would n't do that, sir, I am sure."

"Nor would you take it. There is nothing so comfortable as money,—but nothing so defiling if it be come by unworthily; nothing so comfortable, but nothing so noxious if the mind be allowed to dwell upon it

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constantly. If a man have enough, let him spend it freely. If he wants it, let him earn it honestly. Let him do something for it, so that the man who pays it to him may get its value. But to think that it may be got by gambling, to hope to live after that fashion, to sit down with your fingers almost in your neighbour's pockets, with your eye on his purse, trusting that you may know better than he some studied calculations as to the pips concealed in your hands, praying to the only god you worship that some special card may be vouchsafed to you,—that, I say, is to have left far, far behind you all nobility, all gentleness, all manhood! Write me down Lord Percival's address, and I will send him the money."

Then the Duke wrote a cheque for the money claimed and sent it with a note, as follows:—

"The Duke of Omnium presents his compliments to Lord Percival. The Duke has been informed by Lord Gerald Palliser that Lord Percival has won at cards from him the sum of £3,400. The Duke now encloses a cheque for that amount, and requests that the document which Lord Percival holds from Lord Silverbridge as security for the amount, may be returned to Lord Gerald."

Let the noble gambler have his prey. He was little solicitous about that. If he could only so operate on the mind of this son,—so operate on the minds of both his sons, as to make them see the foolishness of folly, the ugliness of what is mean, the squalor and dirt of ignoble pursuits, then he could easily pardon past faults. If it were half his wealth, what would it signify if he could teach his children to accept those lessons with-

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out which no man can live as a gentleman, let his rank be the highest known, let his wealth be as the sands, his fashion unrivalled.

The word or two which his daughter had said to him, declaring that she still took pride in her lover's love, and then this new misfortune on Gerald's part, upset him greatly. He almost sickened of politics when he thought of his domestic bereavement and his domestic misfortunes. How completely had he failed to indoctrinate his children with the ideas by which his own mind was fortified and controlled! Nothing was so base to him as a gambler, and they had both commenced their career by gambling. From their young boyhood nothing had seemed so desirable to him as that they should be accustomed by early training to devote themselves to the service of their country. He saw other young noblemen around him who at eighteen were known as debaters at their colleges, or at twenty-five were already deep in politics, social science, and educational projects. What good would all his wealth or all his position do for his children if their minds could rise to nothing beyond the shooting of deer and the hunting of foxes? There was young Lord Buttercup, the son of the Earl of Woolantallow, only a few months older than Silverbridge,—who was already a junior lord, and as constant at his office, or during the session on the Treasury Bench, as though there were not a pack of hounds or a card-table in Great Britain! Lord Buttercup, too, had already written an article in The Fortnightly on the subject of Turkish finance. How long would it be before Silverbridge would write an article, or Gerald sign his name in the service of the public?

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And then those proposed marriages,—as to which he was beginning to know that his children would be too strong for him! Anxious as he was that both his sons should be permeated by liberal politics, studious as he had ever been to teach them that the highest duty of those high in rank was to use their authority to elevate those beneath them, still he was hardly less anxious to make them understand that their second duty required them to maintain their own position. It was by feeling this second duty,—by feeling it and performing it,—that they would be enabled to perform the first. And now both Silverbridge and his girl were bent upon marriages by which they would depart out of their own order! Let Silverbridge marry whom he might, he could not be other than heir to the honours of his family. But by his marriage he might either support or derogate from these honours. And now, having at first made a choice that was good, he had altered his mind from simple freak, captivated by a pair of bright eyes and an arch smile; and without a feeling in regard to his family, was anxious to take to his bosom the granddaughter of an American day-labourer!

And then his girl,—of whose beauty he was so proud, from whose manners and tastes and modes of life he had expected to reap those good things, in a feminine degree, which his sons as young men seemed so little fitted to give him! By slow degrees he had been brought round to acknowledge that the young man was worthy. Tregear's conduct had been felt by the Duke to be manly. The letter he had written was a good letter. And then he had won for himself a seat in the House of Commons. When forced to speak of him to his girl he had been driven by justice to call him

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worthy. But how could he serve to support and strengthen that nobility, the endurance and perpetuation of which should be the peculiar care of every Palliser?

And yet, as the Duke walked about his room he felt that his opposition either to the one marriage or to the other was vain. Of course they would marry according to their wills.

That same night Gerald wrote to his brother before he went to bed, as follows:—

"Dear Silver,—I was awfully obliged to you for sending me the I. O. U. for that brute Percival. He only sneered when he took it, and would have said something disagreeable, but that he saw that I was in earnest. I know he did say something to Nid, only I can't find out what. Nid is an easy-going fellow, and, as I saw, did n't want to have a rumpus.

"But now what do you think I 've done? Directly I got home I told the governor all about it! As I was in the train I made up my mind that I would. I went slap at it. If there is anything that never does any good, it 's craning. I did it all at one rush, just as though I was swallowing a dose of physic. I wish I could tell you all that the governor said, because it was really tip-top. What is a fellow to get by playing high,—a fellow like you and me? I did n't want any of that beast's money. I don't suppose he had any. But one's dander gets up, and one does n't like to be done, and so it goes on. I shall cut that kind of thing altogether. You should have heard the governor spouting Latin! And then the way he sat upon Percival, without mentioning the fellow's name! I do

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think it mean to set yourself to work to win money at cards,—and it is awfully mean to lose more than you have got to pay.

"Then at the end the governor said he 'd send the beast a cheque for the amount. You know his way of finishing up, just like two fellows fighting;—when one has awfully punished the other he goes up and shakes hands with him. He did pitch into me,—not abusing me, nor even saying a word about the money, which he at once promised to pay, but, laying it on to gambling with a regular cat-o'-nine-tails. And then there was an end of it. He just asked the fellow's address and said that he would send him the money. I will say this:—I don't think there 's a greater brick than the governor out anywhere.

"I am awfully sorry about Tregear. I can't quite make out how it happened. I suppose you were too near him, and Melrose always does rush at his fences. One fellow should n't be too near another fellow,—only it so often happens that it can't be helped. It 's just like anything else, if nothing comes of it then it 's all right. But if anybody comes to grief then he has got to be pitched into. Do you remember when I nearly cut over old Sir Simon Slobody? Did n't I hear about it!

"I am awfully glad you did n't smash up Tregear altogether, because of Mary. I am quite sure it is no good anybody setting up his back against that. It 's one of the things that have got to be. You always have said that he is a good fellow. If so, what 's the harm? At any rate, it has got to be.

"Your affectionate brother,

"GERALD.

"I go up in about a week."

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CHAPTER XIII.

THE THREE ATTACKS.

DURING the following week the communications between Harrington and Matching were very frequent. There were no further direct messages between Tregear and Lady Mary, but she heard daily of his progress. The Duke was conscious of the special interest which existed in his house as to the condition of the young man, but after his arrival not a word was spoken for some days between him and his daughter on the subject. Then Gerald went back to his college, and the Duke made his preparations for going up to town and making some attempt at parliamentary activity.

It was by no concert that an attack was made upon him from three quarters at once as he was preparing to leave Matching. On the Sunday morning during church time, for on that day Lady Mary went to her devotions alone,—Mrs. Finn was closeted for an hour with the Duke in his study. "I think you ought to be aware," she said to the Duke, "that though I trust Mary implicitly and know her to be thoroughly high principled, I cannot be responsible for her, if I remain with her here."

"I do not quite follow your meaning."

"Of course there is but one matter on which there can probably be any difference between us. If she should choose to write to Mr. Tregear, or to send him a message, or even to go to him, I could not prevent it."

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"Go to him!" exclaimed the horrified Duke.

"I merely suggest such a thing in order to make you understand that I have absolutely no control over her."

"What control have I?"

"Nay; I cannot define that. You are her father, and she acknowledges your authority. She regards me as a friend,—and as such treats me with the sweetest affection. Nothing can be more gratifying than her manner to me personally."

"It ought to be so."

"She has thoroughly won my heart. But still I know that if there were a difference between us, she would not obey me. Why should she?"

"Because you hold my deputed authority."

"Oh Duke, that goes for very little anywhere. No one can depute authority. It comes too much from personal accidents, and too little from reason or law to be handed over to others. Besides, I fear that on one matter concerning her you and I are not agreed."

"I shall be sorry if it be so."

"I feel that I am bound to tell you my opinion."

"Oh yes."

"You think that in the end Lady Mary will allow herself to be separated from Mr. Tregear. I think that in the end they will become man and wife."

This seemed to the Duke to be not quite so bad as it might have been. Any speculation as to results was very different from an expressed opinion as to propriety. Were he to tell the truth as to his own mind, he might perhaps have said the same thing. But one is not to relax in one's endeavours to prevent that which is wrong, because one fears that the wrong may be ulti-

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mately perpetrated. "Let that be as it may," he said, "it cannot alter my duty."

"Nor mine, Duke, if I may presume to think that I have a duty in this matter."

"That you should encounter the burden of the duty binds me to you forever."

"If it be that they will certainly be married one day——"

"Who has said that? Who has admitted that?"

"If it be so; if it seems to me that it must be so,—then how can I be anxious to prolong her sufferings? She does suffer terribly." Upon this the Duke frowned, but there was more of tenderness in his frown than in the hard smile which he had hitherto worn. "I do not know whether you see it all." He well remembered all that he had seen when he and Mary were travelling together. "I see it; and I do not pass half an hour with her without sorrowing for her." On hearing this he sighed and turned his face away. "Girls are so different! There are many who though they be genuinely in love, though their natures are sweet and affectionate, are not strong enough to support their own feelings in resistance to the will of those who have authority over them." Had it been so with his wife? At this moment all the former history passed through his mind. "They yield to that which seems to be inevitable, and allow themselves to be fashioned by the purposes of others. It is well for them often that they are so plastic. Whether it would be better for her that she should be so I will not say."

"It would be better," said the Duke doggedly.

"But such is not her nature. She is as determined as ever."

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"I may be determined too."

"But if at last it will be of no use,—if it be her fate either to be married to this man or die of a broken heart——"

"What justifies you in saying that? How can you torture me by such a threat?"

"If I think so, Duke, I am justified. Of late I have been with her daily,—almost hourly. I do not say that this will kill her now,—in her youth. It is not often, I fancy, that women die after that fashion. But a broken heart may bring the sufferer to the grave after a lapse of many years. How will it be with you if she should live like a ghost beside you for the next twenty years, and you should then see her die, faded and withered before her time,—all her life gone without a joy,—because she had loved a man whose position in life was displeasing to you? Would the ground on which the sacrifice had been made then justify itself to you? In thus performing your duty to your order would you feel satisfied that you had performed that to your child?"

She had come there determined to say it all,—to liberate her own soul as it were,—but had much doubted the spirit in which the Duke would listen to her. That he would listen to her she was sure,—and then if he chose to cast her out, she would endure his wrath. It would not be to her now as it had been when he accused her of treachery. But, nevertheless, bold as she was and independent, he had imbued her, as he did all those around him, with so strong a sense of his personal dignity, that when she had finished she almost trembled as she looked in his face. Since he had asked her how she could justify to herself the threats which

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she was using he had sat still with his eyes fixed upon her. Now, when she had done, he was in no hurry to speak. He rose slowly, and walking towards the fireplace stood with his back towards her, looking down upon the fire. She was the first to speak again. "Shall I leave you now?" she said in a low voice.

"Perhaps it will be better," he answered. His voice, too, was very low. In truth he was so moved that he hardly knew how to speak at all. Then she rose and was already on her way to the door when he followed her. "One moment, if you please," he said almost sternly. "I am under a debt of gratitude to you of which I cannot express my sense in words. How far I may agree with you, and where I may disagree I will not attempt to point out to you now."

"Oh no."

"But all that you have troubled yourself to think and to feel in this matter, and all that true friendship has compelled you to say to me, shall be written down in the tablets of my memory."

"Duke!"

"My child has at any rate been fortunate in securing the friendship of such a friend." Then he turned back to the fireplace, and she was constrained to leave the room without another word.

She had determined to make the best plea in her power for Mary; and while she was making the plea had been almost surprised by her own vehemence; but the greater had been her vehemence, the stronger, she thought, would have been the Duke's anger. And as she had watched the workings of his face, she had felt for the moment that the vials of his wrath were about

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to be poured out upon her. Even when she left the room she almost believed that had he not taken those moments for consideration at the fireplace his parting words would have been different. But, as it was, there could be no question now of her departure. No power was left to her of separating herself from Lady Mary. Though the Duke had not as yet acknowledged himself to be conquered, there was no doubt to her now but that he would be conquered. And she, either here or in London, must be the girl's nearest friend up to the day when she should be given over to Mr. Tregear. That was one of the three attacks which were made upon the Duke before he went up to his parliamentary duties.

The second was as follows. Among the letters on the following morning one was brought to him from Tregear. It is hoped that the reader will remember the lover's former letter and the very unsatisfactory answer which had been sent to it. Nothing could have been colder, less propitious, or more inveterably hostile than the reply. As he lay in bed with his broken bones at Harrington he had ample time for thinking over all this. He knew every word of the Duke's distressing note by heart, and had often lashed himself to rage as he had repeated it. But he could effect nothing by showing his anger. He must go on and still do something. Since the writing of that letter he had done something. He had got his seat in Parliament. And he had secured the interest of his friend Silverbridge. This had been partially done at Polwenning; but the accident in the Brake country had completed the work. The brother had at last declared himself in

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his friend's favour. "Of course I should be glad to see it," he had said while sitting by Tregear's bedside. "The worst is that everything does seem to go against the poor governor."

Then Tregear made up his mind that he would write another letter. Personally he was not in the best condition for doing this as he was lying in bed with his left arm tied up, and with straps and bandages all round his body. But he could sit up in bed, and his right hand and arm were free. So he declared to Lady Chiltern his purpose of writing a letter. She tried to dissuade him gently and offered to be his secretary. But when he assured her that no secretary could write this letter for him, she understood pretty well what would be the subject of the letter. With considerable difficulty Tregear wrote his letter:

"My Lord Duke,"—(On this occasion he left out the epithet which he had before used),—"Your Grace's reply to my last letter was not encouraging, but in spite of your prohibition I venture to write to you again. If I had the slightest reason for thinking that your daughter was estranged from me, I would not persecute either you or her. But if it be true that she is as devoted to me as I am to her, can I be wrong in pleading my cause? Is it not evident to you that she is made of such stuff that she will not be controlled in her choice,—even by your will?

"I have had an accident in the hunting-field and am now writing from Lord Chiltern's house, where I am confined to bed. But I think you will understand me when I say that even in this helpless condition I feel myself constrained to do something. Of course I ask

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for nothing from you on my own behalf,—but on her behalf may I not add my prayers to hers?

"I have the honour to be,

"Your Grace's very faithful servant,

"FRANCIS TREGEAR."

This coming alone would perhaps have had no effect. The Duke had desired the young man not to address him again; and the young man had disobeyed him. No mere courtesy would now have constrained him to send any reply to this further letter. But coming as it did while his heart was still throbbing with the effects of Mrs. Finn's words, it was allowed to have a certain force. The argument used was a true argument. His girl was devoted to the man who sought her hand. Mrs. Finn had told him that sooner or later he must yield,—unless he was prepared to see his child wither and fade at his side. He had once thought that he would be prepared even for that. He had endeavoured to strengthen his own will by arguing with himself that when he saw a duty plainly before him, he should cleave to that let the results be what they might. But that picture of her face, withered and wan after twenty years of sorrowing, had had its effect upon his heart. He even made excuses within his own breast in the young man's favour. He was in Parliament now, and what may not be done for a young man in Parliament? Altogether the young man appeared to him in a light different from that through which he had viewed the presumptuous, arrogant, utterly unjustifiable suitor who had come to him, now nearly a year since, in Carlton Terrace.

He went in to breakfast with Tregear's letter in his

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pocket, and was then gracious to Mrs. Finn and tender to his daughter. "When do you go, papa?" Mary asked.

"I shall take the 11.45 train. I have ordered the carriage at a quarter before eleven."

"May I go to the train with you, papa?"

"Certainly; I shall be delighted."

"Papa!" Mary said as soon as she found herself seated beside her father in the carriage.

"My dear."

"Oh, papa!" and she threw herself on to his breast. He put his arm round her and kissed her,—as he would have had so much delight in doing, as he would have done so often before, had there not been this ground of discord. She was very sweet to him. It had never seemed to him that she had disgraced herself by loving Tregear;—but that a great misfortune had fallen upon her. Silverbridge when he had gone into a racing partnership with Tifto, and Gerald when he had played for money which he did not possess, had—degraded themselves in his estimation. He would not have used such a word; but it was his feeling. They were less noble, less pure than they might have been, had they kept themselves free from such stain. But this girl,—whether she should live and fade by his side, or whether she should give her hand to some fitting noble suitor,—or even though she might at last become the wife of this man who loved her, would always have been pure. It was sweet to him to have something to caress. Now, in the solitude of his life, as years were coming on him, he felt how necessary it was that he should have some one who would love him. Since his wife had left him he had been debarred from these caresses by the

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necessity of showing his antagonism to her dearest wishes. It had been his duty to be stern. In all his words to his daughter he had been governed by a conviction that he never ought to allow the duty of separating her from her lover to be absent from his mind. He was not prepared to acknowledge that that duty had ceased;—but yet there had crept over him a feeling that as he was half conquered, why should he not seek some recompense in his daughter's love. "Papa," she said, "you do not hate me?"

"Hate you, my darling?"

"Because I am disobedient. Oh, papa, I cannot help it. He should not have come. He should not have been let to come." He had not a word to say to her. He could not as yet bring himself to tell her,—that it should be as she desired. Much less could he now argue with her as to the impossibility of such a marriage as he had done on former occasions when the matter had been discussed. He could only press his arm tightly round her waist, and be silent. "It cannot be altered now, papa. Look at me. Tell me that you love me."

"Have you doubted my love?"

"No, papa,—but I would do anything to make you happy; anything that I could do. Papa, you do not want me to marry Lord Popplecourt?"

"I would not have you marry any man without loving him."

"I never can love anybody else. That is what I wanted you to know, papa."

To this he made no reply, nor was there anything else said upon the subject before the carriage drove up to the railway station. "Do not get out, dear," he said,

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seeing that her eyes had been filled with tears. "It is not worth while. God bless you, my child. You will be up in London, I hope, in a fortnight, and we must try to make the house a little less dull for you."

And so he had encountered the third attack.

Lady Mary, as she was driven home, recovered her spirits wonderfully. Not a word had fallen from her father which she could use hereafter as a refuge from her embarrassments. He had made her no promise. He had assented to nothing. But there had been something in his manner, in his gait, in his eye, in the pressure of his arm, which made her feel that her troubles would soon be at an end.

"I do love you so much," she said to Mrs. Finn late on that afternoon.

"I am glad of that, dear."

"I shall always love you,—because you have been on my side all through."

"No, Mary;—that is not so."

"I know it is so. Of course you have to be wise because you are older. And papa would not have you here with me if you were not wise. But I know you are on my side,—and papa knows it too. And some one else shall know it some day."

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CHAPTER XIV.

"HE IS SUCH A BEAST."

LORD SILVERBRIDGE remained hunting in the Brake country till a few days before the meeting of Parliament, and had he been left to himself he would have had another week in the country and might probably have overstayed the opening day; but he had not been left to himself. In the last week in January an important despatch reached his hands, from no less important a person than Sir Timothy Beeswax, suggesting to him that he should undertake the duty of seconding the address in the House of Commons. When the proposition first reached him it made his hair stand on end. He had never yet risen to his feet in the House. He had spoken at those election meetings in Cornwall, and had found it easy enough. After the first or second time he had thought it good fun. But he knew that standing up in the House of Commons would be different from that. Then there would be the dress! "I should so hate to fig myself out and look like a guy," he said to Tregear, to whom, of course, he confided the offer that was made to him. Tregear was very anxious that he should accept it. "A man should never refuse anything of that kind which comes in his way," Tregear said.

"It is only because I am the governor's son," Silverbridge pleaded.

"Partly so, perhaps. But if it be altogether so, what

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of that? Take the goods the gods provide you. Of course all these things which our ambition covets are easier to dukes' sons than to others. But not on that account should a duke's son refuse them. A man when he sees a rung vacant on the ladder should always put his foot there."

"I 'll tell you what," said Silverbridge. "If I thought this were all fair sailing I 'd do it. I should feel certain that I should come a cropper, but still I 'd try it. As you say, a fellow should try. But it 's all meant as a blow at the governor. Old Beeswax thinks that if he can get me up to swear that he and his crew are real first-chop hands, that will hit the governor hard. It 's as much as saying to the governor,—'this chap belongs to me, not to you.' That 's a thing I won't go in for." Then Tregear counselled him to write to his father for advice, and at the same time to ask Sir Timothy to allow him a day or two for consideration. This counsel he took. His letter reached his father two days before he left Matching. In answer to it there came first a telegram begging Silverbridge to be in London on the Monday, and then a letter in which the Duke expressed himself as being anxious to see his son before giving a final answer to the question. Thus it was that Silverbridge had been taken away from his hunting.

Isabel Boncassen, however, was now in London, and from her it was possible that he might find consolation. He had written to her soon after reaching Harrington, telling her that he had had it all out with the governor. "There is a good deal that I can only tell you when I see you," he said. Then he assured her with many lover's protestations that he was and always would be

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till death, altogether her own most loving S. To this he had received an answer by return post. She would be delighted to see him up in town,—as would her father and mother. They had now got a comfortable house in Brook Street. And then she signed herself his sincere friend, Isabel. Silverbridge thought that it was cold, and remembered certain scraps in another feminine handwriting in which more passion was expressed. Perhaps this was the way with American young ladies when they were in love.

"Yes," said the Duke, "I am glad that you have come up at once, as Sir Timothy should have his answer without further delay."

"But what shall I say?"

The Duke, though he had already considered the matter very seriously, nevertheless took a few minutes to consider it again. "The offer," said he, "must be acknowledged as very flattering."

"But the circumstances are not usual."

"It cannot often be the case that a minister should ask the son of his keenest political opponent to render him such a service. But, however, we will put that aside."

"Not quite, sir."

"For the present we will put that on one side. Not looking at the party which you may be called upon to support, having for the moment no regard to this or that line in politics, there is no opening to the real duties of parliamentary life which I would sooner see accorded to you than this."

"But if I were to break down?" Talking to his father he could not quite venture to ask what might happen if he were to "come a cropper."

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"'None but the brave deserve the fair,'" said the Duke, slapping his hands upon the table. "Why; if

> "'We fail, we fail!
> But screw your courage to the sticking place,
> And we 'll not fail.'

What high point would ever be reached if caution such as that were allowed to prevail? What young men have done before, cannot you do? I have no doubt of your capacity. None."

"Have n't you, sir?" said Silverbridge, considerably gratified,—and also surprised.

"None in the least. But, perhaps, some of your diligence."

"I could learn it by heart, sir,—if you mean that."

"But I don't mean that; or rather I mean much more than that. You have first to realise in your mind the thing to be said, and then the words in which you should say it, before you come to learning by heart."

"Some of them, I suppose, would tell me what to say."

"No doubt with your inexperience it would be unfit that you should be left entirely to yourself. But I would wish you to know,—perhaps I should say to feel,—that the sentiments to be expressed by you were just."

"I should have to praise Sir Timothy."

"Not that necessarily. But you would have to advocate that course in Parliament which Sir Timothy and his friends have taken and propose to take."

"But I hate him like poison."

"There need be no personal feeling in the matter. I remember that when I moved the address in your House Mr. Mildmay was Prime Minister,—a man for whom my regard and esteem were unbounded,—who

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had been, in political matters, the preceptor of my youth, whom as a patriotic statesman I almost worshipped, whom I now remember as a man whose departure from the arena of politics left the country very destitute. No one has sprung up since like to him,—or hardly second to him. But in speaking on so large a subject as the policy of a party, I thought it beneath me to eulogise a man. The same policy reversed may keep you silent respecting Sir Timothy."

"I need n't of course say what I think about him."

"I suppose you do agree with Sir Timothy as to his general policy? On no other condition can you undertake such a duty."

"Of course I have voted with him."

"So I have observed,—not so regularly, perhaps, as Mr. Roby would have desired." Mr. Roby was the conservative whip.

"And I suppose the people at Silverbridge expect me to support him."

"I hardly know how that may be. They used to be contented with my poor services. No doubt they feel they have changed for the better."

"You should n't say that, sir."

"I am bound to suppose that they think so, because when the matter was left in their own hands they at once elected a conservative. You need not fear that you will offend them by seconding the address. They will probably feel proud to see their young member brought forward on such an occasion; as I shall be proud to see my son."

"You would if it were on the other side, sir."

"Yes, Silverbridge, yes; I should be very proud if it were on the other side. But there is a useful old adage which bids us not cry for spilt milk. You have

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a right to your opinions, though perhaps I may think that in adopting what I must call new opinions you were a little precipitate. We cannot act together in politics. But not the less on that account do I wish to see you take an active and useful part on that side to which you have attached yourself." As he said this he rose from his seat and spoke with emphasis, as though he were addressing some imaginary Speaker or a house of legislators around. "I shall be proud to hear you second the address. If you do it as gracefully and as fitly as I am sure you may if you will give yourself the trouble, I shall hear you do it with infinite satisfaction, even though I shall feel at the same time anxious to answer all your arguments, and to disprove all your assertions. I should be listening, no doubt, to my opponent;—but I should be proud to feel that I was listening to my son. My advice to you is to do as Sir Timothy has asked you."

"He is such a beast, sir," said Silverbridge.

"Pray do not speak in that way on matters so serious."

"I do not think you quite understand it, sir."

"Perhaps not. Can you enlighten me?"

"I believe he has done this only to annoy you."

The Duke, who had again seated himself, and was leaning back in his chair, raised himself up, placed his hands on the table before him, and looked his son hard in the face. The idea which Silverbridge had just expressed had certainly occurred to himself. He remembered well all the circumstances of the time when he and Sir Timothy Beeswax had been members of the same Government;—and he remembered how animosities had grown, and how treacherous he had thought the man. From the moment in which he had read

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the Minister's letter to the young member, he had felt that the offer had too probably come from a desire to make the political separation between himself and his son complete. But he had thought that in counselling his son he was bound to ignore such a feeling; and it certainly had not occurred to him that Silverbridge would be astute enough to perceive the same thing.

"What makes you fancy that?" said the Duke, striving to conceal by his manner, but not altogether successful in concealing, the gratification which he certainly felt.

"Well, sir, I am not sure that I can explain it. Of course it is putting you in a different boat from me."

"You have already chosen your boat."

"Perhaps he thinks I may get out again. I dislike the skipper so much, that I am not sure that I shall not."

"Oh, Silverbridge,—that is such a fault! So much is included in that which is unstatesmanlike, unpatriotic, almost dishonest! Do you mean to say that you would be this or that in politics according to your personal liking for an individual?"

"When you don't trust the leader, you can't believe very firmly in the followers," said Silverbridge doggedly. "I won't say, sir, what I may do. Though I dare say that what I think is not of much account, I do think a good deal about it."

"I am glad of that."

"And as I think it not at all improbable that I may go back again, if you don't mind it, I will refuse." Of course after that the Duke had no further arguments to use in favour of Sir Timothy's proposition.

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CHAPTER XV.

BROOK STREET.

SILVERBRIDGE had now a week on his hands which he felt he might devote to the lady of his love. It was a comfort to him that he need have nothing to do with the address. To have had to go, day after day, to the Treasury, in order that he might learn his lesson, would have been disagreeable to him. He did not quite know how the lesson would have been communicated, but fancied it would have come from "Old Roby," whom he did not love much better than Sir Timothy. Then the speech must have been composed, and afterwards submitted to some one,—probably to old Roby again, by whom no doubt it would be cut and slashed, and made quite a different speech than he had intended. If he had not praised Sir Timothy himself, Roby,—or whatever other tutor might have been assigned to him,—would have put the praise in. And then how many hours it would have taken to learn "the horrid thing" by heart. He proudly felt that he had not been prompted by idleness to decline the task; but not the less was he glad to have shuffled the burden from off his shoulders.

Early the next morning he was in Brook Street, having sent a note to say he would call, and having even named the hour. And yet when he knocked at the door, he was told with the utmost indifference by a

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London footman, that Miss Boncassen was not at home, —also that Mrs. Boncassen was not at home;—also that Mr. Boncassen was not at home. When he asked at what hour Miss Boncassen was expected home, the man answered him, just as though he had been anybody else, that he knew nothing about it. He turned away in disgust, and had himself driven to the Bear-garden. In his misery he had recourse to game-pie and a pint of champagne for his lunch. "Halloa, old fellow, what is this I hear about you?" said Nidderdale, coming in and sitting opposite to him.

"I don't know what you have heard."

"You are going to second the address. What made them pick you out from the lot of us?"

"It is just what I am not going to do."

"I saw it all in the papers."

"I dare say;—and yet it is n't true. I should n't wonder if they ask you." At this moment a waiter handed a large official letter to Lord Nidderdale, saying that the messenger who had brought it was waiting for an answer in the hall. The letter bore the important signature of T. Beeswax on the corner of the envelope, and so disturbed Lord Nidderdale that he called at once for a glass of soda and brandy. When opened it was found to be very nearly a counterpart of that which Silverbridge had received down in the country. There was, however, added a little prayer that Lord Nidderdale would at once come down to the Treasury Chambers.

"They must be very hard up," said Lord Nidderdale. "But I shall do it. Cantrip is always at me to do something, and you see if I don't butter them up properly." Then having fortified himself with game-

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pie and a glass of brown sherry he went away at once to the Treasury Chambers.

Silverbridge felt himself a little better after his lunch,—better still when he had smoked a couple of cigarettes walking about the empty smoking-room. And as he walked he collected his thoughts. She could hardly have meant to slight him. No doubt her letter down to him at Harrington had been very cold. No doubt he had been ill-treated in being sent away so unceremoniously from the door. But yet she could hardly intend that everything between them should be over. Even an American girl could not be so unreasonable as that. He remembered the passionate way in which she had assured him of her love. All that could not have been forgotten! He had done nothing by which he could have forfeited her esteem. She had desired him to tell the whole affair to her father, and he had done so. Mr. Boncassen might perhaps have objected. It might be that this American was so prejudiced against English aristocrats as to desire no commerce with them. There were not many Englishmen who would not have welcomed him as a son-in-law, but Americans might be different. Still,—still Isabel would hardly have shown her obedience to her father in this way. She was too independent to obey her father in a matter concerning her own heart. And if he had not been the possessor of her heart at that last interview, then she must have been false indeed! So he got once more into his hansom and had himself taken back to Brook Street.

Mrs. Boncassen was in the drawing-room alone. "I am so sorry," said the lady, "but Mr. Boncassen has, I think, just gone out."

"Indeed! and where is Isabel?"

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"Isabel is downstairs,—that is if she has n't gone out too. She did talk of going with her father to the Museum. She is getting quiet bookish. She has got a ticket, and goes there, and has all the things brought to her just like the other learned folks."

"I am anxious to see her, Mrs. Boncassen."

"My! If she has gone out it will be a pity. She was only saying yesterday she would n't wonder if you should n't turn up."

"Of course I 've turned up, Mrs. Boncassen. I was here an hour ago."

"Was it you who called and asked all them questions? My! We could n't make out who it was. The man said it was a flurried young gentleman who would n't leave a card,—but who wanted to see Mr. Boncassen most especial."

"It was Isabel I wanted to see. Did n't I leave a card? No; I don't think I did. I felt so—almost at home, that I did n't think of a card."

"That 's very kind of you, Lord Silverbridge."

"I hope you are going to be my friend, Mrs. Boncassen."

"I am sure I don't know, Lord Silverbridge. Isabel is most used to having her own way, I guess. I think when hearts are joined almost nothing ought to stand between them. But Mr. Boncassen does have doubts. He don't wish as Isabel should force herself anywhere. But here she is, and now she can speak for herself." Whereupon not only did Isabel enter the room, but at the same time Mrs. Boncassen most discreetly left it. It must be confessed that American mothers are not afraid of their daughters.

Silverbridge, when the door was closed, stood look-

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ing at the girl for a moment, and thought that she was more lovely than ever. She was dressed for walking. She still had on her fur jacket, but had taken off her hat. "I was in the parlour downstairs," she said, "when you came in, with papa; and we were going out together; but when I heard who was here, I made him go alone. Was I not good?"

He had not thought of a word to say, or a thing to do;—but he felt as he looked at her that the only thing in the world worth living for was to have her for his own. For a moment he was half abashed. Then in the next she was close in his arms with his lips pressed to hers. He had been so sudden that she had been unable, at any rate thought that she had been unable, to repress him. "Lord Silverbridge," she said, "I told you I would not have it. You have offended me."

"Isabel!"

"Yes; Isabel! Isabel is offended with you. Why did you do it?"

Why did he do it? It seemed to him to be the most unnecessary question. "I want you to know how I love you."

"Will that tell me? That only tells me how little you think of me."

"Then it tells you a falsehood;—for I am thinking of you always. And I always think of you as being the best and dearest and sweetest thing in the world. And now I think you dearer and sweeter than ever." Upon this she tried to frown; but her frown at once broke out into a smile. "When I wrote to say that I was coming, why did you not stay at home for me this morning?"

"I got no letter, Lord Silverbridge."

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"Why did n't you get it?"

"That I cannot say, Lord Silverbridge."

"Isabel, if you are so formal, you will kill me."

"Lord Silverbridge, if you are so forward, you will offend me." Then it turned out that no letter from him had reached the house; and as the letter had been addressed to Bruton Street instead of Brook Street, the failure on the part of the post-office was not surprising.

Whether or no she were offended or he killed he remained with her the whole of that afternoon. "Of course I love you," she said. "Do you suppose I should be here with you if I did not, or that you could have remained in the house after what you did just now? I am not given to run into rhapsodies quite so much as you are,—and being a woman, perhaps it is as well that I don't. But I think I can be quite as true to you as you are to me."

"I am so much obliged to you for that," he said, grasping at her hand.

"But I am sure that rhapsodies won't do any good. Now I 'll tell you my mind."

"You know mine," said Silverbridge.

"I will take it for granted that I do. Your mind is to marry me, will ye nill ye, as the people say." He answered this by merely nodding his head and getting a little nearer to her. "That is all very well in its way, and I am not going to say but what I am gratified." Then he did grasp her hand. "If it pleases you to hear me say so, Lord Silverbridge——"

"Not Lord!"

"Then I shall call you Plantagenet;—only it sounds so horribly historical. Why are you not Thomas or Abraham? But if it will please you to hear me say so,

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I am ready to acknowledge that nothing in all my life ever came near to the delight I have in your love." Hereupon he almost succeeded in getting his arm round her waist. But she was strong and seized his hand and held it. "And I speak no rhapsodies. I tell you a truth which I want you to know and to keep in your heart,—so that you may be always, always sure of it."

"I never will doubt it."

"But that marrying will ye nill ye will not suit me. There is so much wanted for happiness in life."

"I will do all that I can."

"Yes. Even though it be hazardous, I am willing to trust you. If you were as other men are, if you could do as you please, as lower men may do, I would leave father and mother and my own country,—that I might be your wife. I would do that because I love you. But what will my life be here, if they who are your friends turn their backs upon me? What will your life be, if, through all that, you continue to love me?"

"That will all come right."

"And what will your life be, or mine," she said, going on with her own thoughts without seeming to have heard his last words, "if in such a condition as that you did not continue to love me?"

"I should always love you."

"It might be very hard;—and if once felt to be hard, then impossible. You have not looked at it as I have done. Why should you? Even with a wife that was a trouble to you——"

"Oh, Isabel!"

His arm was now round her waist, but she continued speaking as though she were not aware of the em-

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brace. "Yes, a trouble! I shall not be always just what I am now. Now I can be bright and pretty and hold my own with others because I am so. But are you sure,—I am not,—that I am such stuff as an English lady should be made of? If in ten years' time you found that others did not think so,—that, worse again, you did not think so yourself, would you be true to me then?"

"I will always be true to you."

She gently extricated herself, as though she had done so that she might better turn round and look into his face. "Oh, my own one, who can say of himself that it would be so? How could it be so, when you would have all the world against you? You would still be what you are,—with a clog round your leg while at home. In Parliament, among your friends, at your clubs, you would be just what you are. You would be that Lord Silverbridge who had all good things at his disposal,—except that he had been unfortunate in his marriage! But what should I be?" Though she paused he could not answer her,—not yet. There was a solemnity in her speech which made it necessary that he should hear her to the end. "I, too, have my friends in my own country. It is no disgrace to me there that my grandfather worked on the quays. No one holds her head higher than I do, or is more sure of being able to hold it. I have there that assurance of esteem and honour which you have here. I would lose it all to do you a good. But I will not lose it to do you an injury."

"I don't know about injuries," he said, getting up and walking about the room. "But I am sure of this. You will have to be my wife."

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"If your father will take me by the hand and say that I shall be his daughter, I will risk all the rest. Even then it might not be wise; but we love each other too well not to run some peril. Do you think that I want anything better than to preside in your home, to soften your cares, to welcome your joys, to be the mother perhaps of your children, and to know that you are proud that I should be so? No, my darling. I can see a paradise;—only, only, I may not be fit to enter it. I must use some judgment better than my own, sounder, dear, than yours. Tell the Duke what I say;—tell him with what language a son may use to his father. And remember that all you ask for yourself you will ask doubly for me."

"I will ask him so that he cannot refuse me."

"If you do I shall be contented. And now, go. I have said ever so much, and I am tired."

"Isabel! Oh, my love."

"Yes; Isabel;—your love! I am that at any rate for the present,—and proud to be so as a queen. Well, if it must be, this once,—as I have been so hard to you." Then she gave him her cheek to kiss, but of course he took more than she gave.

When he got out into the street it was dark, and there was still standing the faithful cab. But he felt that at the present moment it would be impossible to sit still, and he dismissed the equipage. He walked rapidly along Brook Street into Park Lane, and from thence to the park, hardly knowing whither he went in the enthusiasm of the moment. He walked back to the Marble Arch, and thence round by the drive to the Guard House and the bridge over the Serpentine, by the Knightsbridge Barracks to Hyde Park Corner.

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Though he should give up everything, and go and live in her own country with her, he would marry her. His politics, his hunting, this address to the Queen, his horses, his guns, his father's wealth, and his own rank, —what were they all to Isabel Boncassen? In meeting her he had met the one human being in all the world who could really be anything to him either in friendship or in love. When she had told him what she would do for him to make his home happy, it had seemed to him that all other delights must fade away from him forever. How odious were Tifto and his race-horses, how unmeaning the noise of his club, how terrible the tedium of those parliamentary benches! He could not tell his love as she had told hers! He acknowledged to himself that his words could not be as her words,—nor his intellect as hers. But his heart could be as true. She had spoken to him of his name, his rank, and all his outside world around him. He would make her understand at last that they were nothing to him in comparison with her. When he had got round to Hyde Park Corner, he felt that he was almost compelled to go back again to Brook Street. In no other place could there be anything to interest him;—nowhere else could there be light, or warmth, or joy! But what would she think of him? To go back hot, and soiled with mud, in order that he might say one more adieu,—that possibly he might ravish one more kiss,—would hardly be manly. He must postpone all that for the morrow. On the morrow, of course, he would be there.

But his work was all before him! That prayer had to be made to his father; or rather some wonderful effort of eloquence must be made by which his father

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might be convinced that this girl was so infinitely superior to anything of feminine creation that had ever hitherto been seen or heard of, that all ideas as to birth, country, rank, or name ought in this instance to count for nothing. He did believe himself that he had found such a pearl, that no question of setting need be taken into consideration. If the Duke would not see it the fault would be in the Duke's eyes, or perhaps in his own words,—but certainly not in the pearl.

Then he compared her to poor Lady Mabel, and in doing so did arrive at something near the truth in his inward delineation of the two characters. Lady Mabel with all her grace, with all her beauty, with all her talent, was a creature of efforts,—or, as it might be called, a manufactured article. She strove to be graceful, to be lovely, to be agreeable and clever. Isabel was all this and infinitely more without any struggle. When he was most fond of Mabel, most anxious to make her his wife, there had always been present to him a feeling that she was old. Though he knew her age to a day,—and knew her to be younger than himself, yet she was old. Something had gone of her native bloom, something had been scratched and chipped from the first fair surface, and this had been repaired by varnish and veneering. Though he had loved her he had never been altogether satisfied with her. But Isabel was as young as Hebe. He knew nothing of her actual years, but he did know that to have seemed younger, or to have seemed older,—to have seemed in any way different from what she was,—would have been to be less perfect.

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CHAPTER XVI.

"PERT POPPET!"

On a Sunday morning,—while Lord Silverbridge was alone in a certain apartment in the house in Carlton Terrace which was called his own sitting-room, the name was brought him of a gentleman who was anxious to see him. He had seen his father, and had used all the eloquence of which he was master,—but not quite with the effect which he had desired. His father had been very kind, but he, too, had been eloquent;—and had, as is often the case with orators, been apparently more moved by his own words than by those of his adversary. If he had not absolutely declared himself as irrevocably hostile to Miss Boncassen he had not said a word that might be supposed to give token of assent.

Silverbridge, therefore, was moody, contemplative, and desirous of solitude. Nothing that the Duke had said had shaken him. He was still sure of his pearl, and quite determined that he would wear it. Various thoughts were running through his brain. What if he were to abdicate the title and become a republican? He was inclined to think that he could not abdicate, but he was quite sure that no one could prevent him from going to America and calling himself Mr. Palliser. That his father would forgive him and accept the daughter-in-law brought to him, were he in the first place to marry without sanction, he felt quite sure.

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What was there that his father would not forgive? But then Isabel would not assent to this. He was turning it all in his head and ever and anon trying to relieve his mind by "Clarissa," which he was reading in conformity with his father's advice, when the gentleman's card was put into his hand. "Whatever does he want here?" he said to himself; and then he ordered that the gentleman might be shown up. The gentleman in question was our old friend Dolly Longstaff. Dolly Longstaff and Silverbridge had been intimate as young men are. But they were not friends, nor, as far as Silverbridge knew, had Dolly ever set his foot in that house before. "Well, Dolly," said he, "what 's the matter now?"

"I suppose you are surprised to see me?"

"I did n't think that you were ever up so early." It was at this time almost noon.

"Oh, come now, that 's nonsense. I can get up as early as anybody else. I have changed all that for the last four months. I was at breakfast this morning very soon after ten."

"What a miracle! Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Well yes,—there is. Of course you are surprised to see me?"

"You never were here before; and therefore it is odd."

"It is odd; I felt that myself. And when I tell you what I have come about you will think it more odd. I know I can trust you with a secret."

"That depends, Dolly."

"What I mean is, I know you are good-natured. There are ever so many fellows that are one's most in-

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timate friends that would say anything on earth they could that was ill-natured."

"I hope they are not my friends."

"Oh yes, they are. Think of Glasslough, or Popplecourt, or Hindes! If they knew anything about you that you did n't want to have known,—about a young lady or anything of that kind,—don't you think they 'd tell everybody?"

"A man can't tell anything he does n't know."

"That 's true. I had thought of that myself. But then there 's a particular reason for my telling you this. It is about a young lady! You won't tell; will you?"

"No, I won't. But I can't see why on earth you should come to me. You are ever so many years older than I am."

"I had thought of that too. But you are just the person I must tell. I want you to help me."

These last words were said in a whisper, and Dolly as he said them had drawn nearer to his friend. Silverbridge remained in suspense, saying nothing by way of encouragement. Dolly, either in love with his own mystery or doubtful of his own purpose, sat still, looking eagerly at his companion. "What the mischief is it?" asked Silverbridge impatiently.

"I have quite made up my own mind."

"That 's a good thing, at any rate."

"I am not what you would have called a marrying sort of man."

"I should have said,—no. But I suppose most men do marry sooner or later."

"That 's just what I said to myself. It has to be done, you know. There are three different properties coming to me. At least one has come already."

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"You 're a lucky fellow."

"I 've made up my mind; and when I say a thing I mean to do it."

"But what can I do?"

"That 's just what I 'm coming to. If a man does marry I think he ought to be attached to her." To this, as a broad proposition, Silverbridge was ready to accede. But, regarding Dolly as a middle-aged sort of fellow, one of those men who marry because it is convenient to have a house kept for them, he simply nodded his head. "I am awfully attached to her," Dolly went on to say.

"That 's all right."

"Of course there are fellows who marry girls for their money. I 've known men who have married their grandmothers."

"Not really!"

"That kind of thing. When a woman is old it does not much matter who she is. But my one! She 's not old!"

"Nor rich?"

"Well; I don't know about that. But I 'm not after her money. Pray understand that. It 's because I 'm downright fond of her. She 's an American."

"A what?" said Silverbridge, startled.

"You know her. That 's the reason I 've come to you. It 's Miss Boncassen." A dark frown came across the young man's face. That all this should be said to him was disgusting. That an owl like that should dare to talk of loving Miss Boncassen was offensive to him. "It 's because you know her that I 've come to you. She thinks that you 're after her."

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Dolly as he said this lifted himself quickly up in his seat, and nodded his head mysteriously as he looked into his companion's face. It was as much as though he should say, "I see you are surprised, but so it is." Then he went on. "She does, the pert poppet!" This was almost too much for Silverbridge; but still he contained himself. "She won't look at me because she has got it into her head that perhaps some day she may be Duchess of Omnium! That, of course, is out of the question."

"Upon my word all this seems to me to be so very —very,—distasteful that I think you had better say nothing more about it."

"It is distasteful," said Dolly; "but the truth is I am so downright,—what you may call enamoured——"

"Don't talk such stuff as that here," said Silverbridge, jumping up. "I won't have it."

"But I am. There is nothing I would n't do to get her. Of course it 's a good match for her. I 've got three separate properties; and when the governor goes off I shall have a clear fifteen thousand a year."

"Oh, bother!"

"Of course that 's nothing to you, but it is a very tidy income for a commoner. And how is she to do better?"

"I don't know how she could do much worse," said Silverbridge in a transport of rage. Then he pulled his moustache in vexation, angry with himself that he should have allowed himself to say even a word on so preposterous a supposition. Isabel Boncassen and Dolly Longstaff! It was Titania and Bottom over again. It was absolutely necessary that he should get

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rid of this intruder, and he began to be afraid that he could not do this without using language which would be uncivil. "Upon my word," he said, "I think you had better not talk about it any more. The young lady is one for whom I have a very great respect."

"I mean to marry her," said Dolly, thinking thus to vindicate himself.

"You might as well think of marrying one of the stars."

"One of the stars!"

"Or a royal princess!"

"Well! Perhaps that is your opinion, but I can't say that I agree with you. I don't see why she should n't take me. I can give her a position which you may call A 1 out of the peerage. I can bring her into society. I can make an English lady of her."

"You can't make anything of her,—except to insult her,—and me, too, by talking of her."

"I don't quite understand this," said the unfortunate lover getting up from his seat. "Very likely she won't have me. Perhaps she has told you so."

"She never mentioned your name to me in her life. I don't suppose she remembers your existence."

"But I say that there can be no insult in such a one as me asking such a one as her to be my wife. To say that she does n't remember my existence is absurd."

"Why should I be troubled with all this?"

"Because I think you 're making a fool of her, and because I 'm honest. That 's why," said Dolly with much energy. There was something in this which partly reconciled Silverbridge to his despised rival. There was a touch of truth about the man, though he was so utterly mistaken in his ideas. "I want you to

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give over in order that I may try again. I don't think you ought to keep a girl from her promotion, merely for the fun of a flirtation. Perhaps you 're fond of her;—but you won't marry her. I am fond of her, and I shall."

After a minute's pause Silverbridge resolved that he would be magnanimous. "Miss Boncassen is going to be my wife," he said.

"Your wife!"

"Yes;—my wife. And now I think you will see that nothing further can be said about this matter."

"Duchess of Omnium!"

"She will be Lady Silverbridge."

"Oh; of course she 'll be that first. Then I 've got nothing further to say. I 'm not going to enter myself to run against you. Only I should n't have believed it if anybody else had told me."

"Such is my good fortune."

"Oh, ah,—yes; of course. That is one way of looking at it. Well; Silverbridge, I 'll tell you what I shall do; I shall hook it."

"No; no, not you."

"Yes, I shall. I dare say you won't believe me, but I 've got such a feeling about me here"—as he said this he laid his hand upon his heart,—"that if I stayed I should go in for hard drinking. I shall take the great Asiatic tour. I know a fellow that wants to go, but he has n't got any money. I dare say I shall be off before the end of next month. You don't know any fellow that would buy half-a-dozen hunters; do you?" Silverbridge shook his head. "Good-bye," said Dolly in a melancholy tone; "I am sure I am very much obliged to you for telling me. If I 'd known

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you 'd meant it, I should n't have meddled, of course. Duchess of Omnium!"

"Look here, Dolly, I have told you what I should not have told any one, but I wanted to screen the young lady's name."

"It was so kind of you."

"Do not repeat it. It is a kind of thing that ladies are particular about. They choose their own time for letting everybody know." Then Dolly promised to be as mute as a fish, and took his departure.

Silverbridge had felt, towards the end of the interview, that he had been arrogant to the unfortunate man,—particularly in saying that the young lady would not remember the existence of such a suitor,—and had also recognised a certain honesty in the man's purpose, which had not been the less honest because it was so absurd. Actuated by the consciousness of this, he had swallowed his anger, and had told the whole truth. Nevertheless things had been said which were horrible to him. This buffoon of a man had called his Isabel a—pert poppet! How was he to get over the remembrance of such an offence? And then the wretch had declared that he was—enamoured! There was sacrilege in the term when applied by such a man to Isabel Boncassen. He had thoughts of days to come, when everything would be settled, when he might sit close to her and call her pretty names,—when he might in sweet familiarity tell her that she was a little Yankee and a fierce republican, and "chaff" her about the stars and stripes; and then, as he pictured the scene to himself in his imagination, she would lean upon him and would give him back his chaff, and would call him an aristocrat, and would laugh at his titles. As he thought

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of all this he would be proud with the feeling that such privileges would be his own. And now this wretched man had called her a pert poppet!

There was a sanctity about her,—a divinity which made it almost a profanity to have talked about her at all to such a one as Dolly Longstaff. She was his holy of holies, at which vulgar eyes should not even be allowed to gaze. It had been a most unfortunate interview. But this was clear; that, as he had announced his engagement to such a one as Dolly Longstaff, the matter now would admit of no delay. He would explain to his father that as tidings of the engagement had got abroad, honour to the young lady would compel him to come forward openly as her suitor at once. If this argument might serve him, then perhaps this intrusion would not have been altogether a misfortune.

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CHAPTER XVII.

"LOVE MAY BE A GREAT MISFORTUNE."

SILVERBRIDGE when he reached Brook Street that day was surprised to find that a large party was going to lunch there. Isabel had asked him to come, and he had thought her the dearest girl in the world for doing so. But now his gratitude for that favour was considerably abated. He did not care just now for the honour of eating his lunch in the presence of Mr. Gotobed, the American Minister, whom he found there already in the drawing-room with Mrs. Gotobed, nor with Ezekiel Sevenkings, the great American poet from the far West, who sat silent and stared at him in an unpleasant way. When Sir Timothy Beeswax was announced, with Lady Beeswax and her daughter, his gratification certainly was not increased. And the last comer,—who did not arrive indeed till they were all seated at table,—almost made him start from his chair and take his departure suddenly. That last comer was no other than Mr. Adolphus Longstaff. As it happened he was seated next to Dolly, with Lady Beeswax on the other side of him. Whereas his holy of holies was on the other side of Dolly! The arrangement made seemed to him to have been monstrous. He had endeavoured to get next to Isabel; but she had so manœuvred that there should be a vacant chair between them. He had not much regarded this because a vacant chair may be pushed on one side. But before he had made all his calculations Dolly Long-

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staff was sitting there! He almost thought that Dolly winked at him in triumph,—that very Dolly who an hour ago had promised to take himself off upon his Asiatic travels!

Sir Timothy and the Minister kept up the conversation very much between them, Sir Timothy flattering everything that was American, and the Minister finding fault with very many things that were English. Now and then Mr. Boncassen would put in a word to soften the severe honesty of his countryman, or to correct the euphemistic falsehoods of Sir Timothy. The poet seemed always to be biding his time. Dolly ventured to whisper a word to his neighbour. It was but to say that the frost had broken up. But Silverbridge heard it and looked daggers at every one. Then Lady Beeswax expressed to him a hope that he was going to do great things in Parliament this session. "I don't mean to go near the place," he said, not at all conveying any purpose to which he had really come, but driven by the stress of the moment to say something that should express his general hatred of everybody. Mr. Lupton was there, on the other side of Isabel, and was soon engaged with her in a pleasant familiar conversation. Then Silverbridge remembered that he had always thought Lupton to be a most conceited prig. Nobody gave himself so many airs, or was so careful as to the dying of his whiskers. It was astonishing that Isabel should allow herself to be amused by such an antiquated coxcomb. When they had finished eating they moved about and changed their places, Mr. Boncassen being rather anxious to stop the flood of American eloquence which came from his friend Mr. Gotobed. British viands had become subject to his

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criticism, and Mr. Gotobed had declared to Mr. Lupton that he did n't believe that London could produce a dish of squash or tomatoes. He was quite sure you could n't have sweet corn. Then there had been a moving of seats in which the Minister was shuffled off to Lady Beeswax, and the poet found himself by the side of Isabel. "Do you not regret our mountains and our prairies," said the poet; "our great waters and our green savannahs?" "I think more perhaps of Fifth Avenue," said Miss Boncassen. Silverbridge, who at this moment was being interrogated by Sir Timothy, heard every word of it.

"I was so sorry, Lord Silverbridge," said Sir Timothy, "that you could not accede to our little request."

"I did not quite see my way," said Silverbridge, with his eye upon Isabel.

"So I understood, but I hope that things will make themselves clearer to you shortly. There is nothing that I desire so much as the support of young men such as yourself,—the very cream, I may say, of the whole country. It is to the young conservative thoughtfulness and the truly British spirit of our springing aristocracy that I look for that reaction which I am sure will at last carry us safely over the rocks and shoals of communistic propensities."

"I should n't wonder if it did," said Silverbridge. They did n't think that he was going to remain down there talking politics to an old humbug like Sir Timothy when the sun, and moon, and all the stars had gone up into the drawing-room! For at that moment Isabel was making her way to the door.

But Sir Timothy had button-holed him. "Of course it is late now to say anything further about the address.

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We have arranged that. Not quite as I would have wished, for I had set my heart upon initiating you into the rapturous pleasure of parliamentary debate. But I hope that a good time is coming. And pray remember this, Lord Silverbridge;—there is no member sitting on our side of the House, and I need hardly say on the other, whom I would go farther to oblige than your father's son."

"I 'm sure that 's very kind," said Silverbridge, absolutely using a little force as he disengaged himself. Then he at once followed the ladies upstairs, passing the poet on the stairs. "You have hardly spoken to me," he whispered to Isabel. He knew that to whisper to her now, with the eyes of many upon him, with the ears of many open, was an absurdity; but he could not refrain himself.

"There are so many to be,—entertained, as people say! I don't think I ought to have to entertain you," she answered, laughing. No one heard her but Silverbridge, and yet she did not seem to whisper. She left him, however, at once, and was soon engaged in conversation with Sir Timothy.

A convivial lunch I hold to be altogether bad, but the worst of its many evils is that vacillating mind which does not know when to take its owner off. Silverbridge was on this occasion quite determined not to take himself off at all. As it was only a lunch the people must go, and then he would be left with Isabel. But the vacillation of the others was distressing to him. Mr. Lupton went, and poor Dolly got away apparently without a word. But the Beeswaxes and the Gotobeds would not go, and the poet sat staring immovably. In the meanwhile, Silverbridge endeavoured to make

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the time pass lightly by talking to Mrs. Boncassen. He had been so determined to accept Isabel with all her adjuncts that he had come almost to like Mrs. Boncassen, and would certainly have taken her part violently had any one spoken ill of her in his presence.

Then suddenly he found that the room was nearly empty. The Beeswaxes and the Gotobeds were gone; and at last the poet himself, with a final glare of admiration at Isabel, had taken his departure. When Silverbridge looked round, Isabel also was gone. Then, too, Mrs. Boncassen had left the room suddenly. At the same instant Mr. Boncassen entered by another door, and the two men were alone together. "My dear Lord Silverbridge," said the father, "I want to have a few words with you." Of course there was nothing for him but to submit. "You remember what you said to me down at Matching?"

"Oh yes; I remember that."

"You did me the great honour of expressing a wish to make my child your wife."

"I was asking for a very great favour."

"That also;—for there is no greater favour that I could do to any man than to give him my daughter. Nevertheless, you were doing me a great honour,—and you did it, as you do everything, with an honest grace that went far to win my heart. I am not at all surprised, sir, that you should have won hers." The young man as he heard this could only blush and look foolish. "If I know my girl, neither your money nor your title would go for anything."

"I think much more of her love, Mr. Boncassen, than I do of anything else in the world."

"But love, my lord, may be a great misfortune."

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As he said this the tone of his voice was altered, and there was a melancholy solemnity not only in his words but in his countenance. "I take it that young people when they love rarely think of more than the present moment. If they did so the bloom would be gone from their romance. But others have to do this for them. If Isabel had come to me saying that she loved a poor man, there would not have been much to disquiet me. A poor man may earn bread for himself and his wife, and if he failed I could have found them bread. Nor, had she loved somewhat below her own degree, should I have opposed her. So long as her husband had been an educated man, there might have been no future punishment to fear."

"I don't think she could have done that," said Silverbridge.

"At any rate she has not done so. But how am I to look upon this that she has done?"

"I 'll do my best for her, Mr. Boncassen."

"I believe you would. But even your love can't make her an Englishwoman. You can make her a duchess."

"Not that, sir."

"But you can't give her a parentage fit for a duchess; —not fit at least in the opinion of those with whom you will pass your life, with whom,—or perhaps without whom,—she will be destined to pass her life, if she becomes your wife! Unfortunately it does not suffice that you should think it fit. Though you loved each other as well as any man and woman that ever were brought into each other's arms by the beneficence of God, you cannot make her happy,—unless you can ensure her the respect of those around her."

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"All the world will respect her."

"Her conduct,—yes. I think the world, your world, would learn to do that. I do not think it could help itself. But that would not suffice. I may respect the man who cleans my boots. But he would be a wretched man if he were thrown on me for society. I would not give him my society. Will your duchesses and your countesses give her theirs."

"Certainly they will."

"I do not ask for it as thinking it to be of more value than that of others; but were she to become your wife she would be so abnormally placed as to require it for her comfort. She would have become a lady of high rank,—not because she loves rank, but because she loves you."

"Yes, yes, yes;" said Silverbridge, hardly himself knowing why he became impetuous.

"But having removed herself into that position, being as she would be, a countess, or a duchess, or what not, how could she be happy if she were excluded from the community of countesses and duchesses?"

"They are not like that," said Silverbridge.

"I will not say that they are, but I do not know. Having Anglican tendencies, I have been wont to contradict my countrymen when they have told me of the narrow exclusiveness of your nobles. Having found your nobles and your commoners all alike in their courtesy,—which is a cold word; in their hospitable friendships,—I would now not only contradict, but would laugh to scorn any such charge,"—so far he spoke somewhat loudly, and then dropped his voice as he concluded,—"were it anything less than the happiness of my child that is in question."

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"What am I to say, sir? I only know this; I am not going to lose her."

"You are a fine fellow. I was going to say that I wished you were an American, so that Isabel need not lose you. But, my boy, I have told you that I do not know how it might be. Of all whom you know, who could best tell me the truth on such a subject? Who is there whose age will have given him experience, whose rank will have made him familiar with this matter, who from friendship to you would be least likely to decide against your wishes, who from his own native honesty would be most sure to tell the truth?"

"You mean my father," said Silverbridge.

"I do mean your father. Happily he has taken no dislike to the girl herself. I have seen enough of him to feel sure that he is devoted to his own children."

"Indeed he is."

"A just and a liberal man;—one, I should say, not carried away by prejudices! Well,—my girl and I have just put our heads together, and we have come to a conclusion. If the Duke of Omnium will tell us that she would be safe as your wife,—safe from the contempt of those around her,—you shall have her. And I shall rejoice to give her to you,—not because you are Lord Silverbridge, not because of your rank and wealth; but because you are—that individual human being whom I now hold by the hand."

When the American had come to an end Silverbridge was too much moved to make any immediate answer. He had an idea in his own mind that the appeal was not altogether fair. His father was a just man,—just, affectionate, and liberal. But then it will so often happen that fathers do not want their sons to marry

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those very girls on whom the sons have set their hearts. He could only say that he would speak to his father again on the subject. "Let him tell me that he is contented," said Mr. Boncassen, "and I will tell him I am contented. Now, my friend, good-bye." Silverbridge begged that he might be allowed to see Isabel before he was turned out; but Isabel had left the house in company with her mother.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

"WHAT AM I TO SAY, SIR?"

When Silverbridge left Mr. Boncassen's house he was resolved to go to his father without an hour's delay, and represent to the Duke exactly how the case stood. He would be urgent, piteous, submissive, and eloquent. In any other matter he would promise to make whatever arrangements his father might desire. He would make his father understand that all his happiness depended on this marriage. When once married he would settle down, even at Gatherum Castle if the Duke should wish it. He would not think of race-horses, he would desert the Beargarden, he would learn blue-books by heart, and only do as much shooting and hunting as would become a young nobleman in his position. All this he would say as eagerly and as pleasantly as it might be said. But he would add to all this an assurance of his unchangeable intention. It was his purpose to marry Isabel Boncassen. If he could do this with his father's good will,—so best. But at any rate he would marry her!

The world at this time was altogether busy with political rumours; and it was supposed that Sir Timothy Beeswax would do something very clever. It was supposed also that he would sever himself from some of his present companions. On that point everybody was agreed,—and on that point only everybody was

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right. Lord Drummond, who was the titular Prime Minister, and Sir Timothy, had, during a considerable part of the last session, and through the whole vacation, so belarded each other with praise in all their public expressions that it was quite manifest that they had quarrelled. When any body of statesmen make public asseverations by one or various voices, that there is no discord among them, not a dissentient voice on any subject, people are apt to suppose that they cannot hang together much longer. It is the man who has no peace at home that declares abroad that his wife is an angel. He who lives on comfortable terms with the partner of his troubles can afford to acknowledge the ordinary rubs of life. Old Mr. Mildmay, who was Prime Minister for so many years, and whom his party worshipped, used to say that he had never found a gentleman who quite agreed with him all round; but Sir Timothy has always been in exact accord with all his colleagues,—till he has left them, or they him. Never had there been such concord as of late,—and men, clubs, and newspapers now protested that as a natural consequence there would soon be a break-up.

But not on that account would it perhaps be necessary that Sir Timothy should resign,—or not necessary that his resignation should be permanent. The conservative majority had dwindled,—but still there was a majority. It certainly was the case that Lord Drummond could not get on without Sir Timothy. But might it not be possible that Sir Timothy should get on without Lord Drummond? If so, he must begin his action in this direction by resigning. He would have to place his resignation, no doubt with infinite regret,

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in the hands of Lord Drummond. But if such a step were to be taken now, just as Parliament was about to assemble, what would become of the Queen's speech, of the address, and of the noble peers and noble and other commoners who were to propose and second it in the two Houses of Parliament? There were those who said that such a trick played at the last moment would be very shabby. But then again there were those who foresaw that the shabbiness would be made to rest anywhere rather than on the shoulders of Sir Timothy. If it should turn out that he had striven manfully to make things run smoothly;—that the Premier's incompetence, or the Chancellor's obstinacy, or this or that Secretary's peculiarity of temper had done it all;—might not Sir Timothy then be able to emerge from the confused flood, and swim along pleasantly with his head higher than ever above the waters?

In these great matters parliamentary management goes for so much! If a man be really clever and handy at his trade, if he can work hard and knows what he is about, if he can give and take and be not thin-skinned or sore-bored, if he can ask pardon for a peccadillo and seem to be sorry with a good grace, if above all things he be able to surround himself with the prestige of success, then so much will be forgiven him! Great gifts of eloquence are hardly wanted, or a deep-seated patriotism which is capable of strong indignation. A party has to be managed, and he who can manage it best, will probably be its best leader. The subordinate task of legislation and of executive government may well fall into the inferior hands of less astute practitioners. It was admitted on both sides that there was no man like Sir Timothy for managing the

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House or coercing a party, and there was therefore a general feeling that it would be a pity that Sir Timothy should be squeezed out. He knew all the little secrets of the business;—could arrange, let the cause be what it might, to get a full House for himself and his friends, and empty benches for his opponents,—could foresee a thousand little things to which even a Walpole would have been blind, which a Pitt would not have condescended to regard, but with which his familiarity made him a very comfortable leader of the House of Commons. There were various ideas prevalent as to the politics of the coming session; but the prevailing idea was in favour of Sir Timothy.

The Duke was at Longroyston, the seat of his old political ally the Duke of St. Bungay, and had been absent from Sunday the 6th till the morning of Friday the 11th, on which day Parliament was to meet. On that morning at about noon a letter came to the son saying that his father had returned and would be glad to see him. Silverbridge was going to the House on that day and was not without his own political anxieties. If Lord Drummond remained in, he thought that he must, for the present, stand by the party which he had adopted. If, however, Sir Timothy should become Prime Minister there would be a loophole for escape. There were some three or four besides himself who detested Sir Timothy, and in such case he might perhaps have company in his desertions. All this was on his mind; but through all this he was aware that there was a matter of much deeper moment which required his energies. When his father's message was brought to him he told himself at once that now was the time for his eloquence.

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"Well, Silverbridge," said the Duke, "how are matters going on with you?" There seemed to be something in his father's manner more than ordinarily jocund and good-humoured.

"With me, sir?"

"I don't mean to ask any party secrets. If you and Sir Timothy understand each other, of course you will be discreet."

"I can't be discreet, sir, because I don't know anything about him."

"When I heard," said the Duke, smiling, "of your being in close conference with Sir Timothy——"

"I, sir?"

"Yes, you. Mr. Boncassen told me that you and he were so deeply taken up with each other at his house, that nobody could get a word with either of you."

"Have you seen Mr. Boncassen?" asked the son, whose attention was immediately diverted from his father's political badinage.

"Yes;—I have seen him. I happened to meet him where I was dining last Sunday, and he walked home with me. He was so intent upon what he was saying that I fear he allowed me to take him out of his way."

"What was he talking about?" asked Silverbridge. All his preparations, all his eloquence, all his method, now seemed to have departed from him.

"He was talking about you," said the Duke.

"He had told me that he wanted to see you. What did he say, sir?"

"I suppose you can guess what he said. He wished to know what I thought of the offer you have made to his daughter." The great subject had come up so easily, so readily, that he was almost aghast when he found

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himself in the middle of it. And yet he must speak of the matter, and that at once.

"I hope you raised no objection, sir," he said.

"The objection came mainly from him; and I am bound to say that every word that fell from him was spoken with wisdom."

"But still he asked you to consent."

"By no means. He told me his opinion,—and then he asked me a question."

"I am sure he did not say that we ought not to be married."

"He did say that he thought you ought not to be married if——"

"If what, sir?"

"If there were probabilities that his daughter would not be well received as your wife. Then he asked me what would be my reception of her." Silverbridge looked up into his father's face with beseeching, imploring eyes, as though everything now depended on the few next words that he might utter. "I shall think it an unwise marriage," continued the Duke. Silverbridge when he heard this at once knew that he had gained his cause. His father had spoken of the marriage as a thing that was to happen. A joyous light dawned in his eyes, and the look of pain went from his brow,—all which the Duke was not slow to perceive. "I shall think it an unwise marriage," he continued, repeating his words; "but I was bound to tell him that were Miss Boncassen to become your wife she would also become my daughter."

"Oh, sir."

"I told him why the marriage would be distasteful to me. Whether I may be wrong or right I think it

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to be for the good of our country, for the good of our order, for the good of our individual families, that we should support each other by marriage. It is not as though we were a narrow class, already too closely bound together by family alliances. The room for choice might be wide enough for you without going across the Atlantic to look for her who is to be the mother of your children. To this Mr. Boncassen replied that he was to look solely to his daughter's happiness. He meant me to understand that he cared nothing for my feelings. Why should he? That which to me is deep wisdom is to him an empty prejudice. He asked me then how others would receive her."

"I am sure that everybody would like her," said Silverbridge.

"I like her. I like her very much."

"I am so glad."

"But still all this is a sorrow to me. When, however, he put that question to me about the world around her, —as to those among whom her lot would be cast, I could not say that I thought she would be rejected."

"Oh no!" The idea of rejecting Isabel!

"She has a brightness and a grace all her own," continued the Duke, "which will ensure her acceptance in all societies."

"Yes, yes;—it is just that, sir."

"You will be a nine days' wonder,—the foolish young nobleman who chose to marry an American."

"I think it will be just the other way up, sir,—among the men."

"But her place will I think be secure to her. That is what I told Mr. Boncassen."

"It is all right with him then,—now?"

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"If you call it all right. You will understand, of course, that you are acting in opposition to my advice, —and my wishes."

"What am I to say, sir?" exclaimed Silverbridge, almost in despair. "When I love the girl better than my life, and when you tell me that she can be mine if I choose to take her; when I have asked her to be my wife, and have got her to say that she likes me; when her father has given way, and all the rest of it, would it be possible that I should say now that I will give her up?"

"My opinion is to go for nothing,—in anything!" The Duke as he said this knew that he was expressing aloud a feeling which should have been restrained within his own bosom. It was natural that there should have been such plaints. The same suffering must be encountered in regard to Tregear and his daughter. In every way he had been thwarted. In every direction he was driven to yield. And yet now he had to undergo rebuke from his own son, because one of those inward plaints would force itself from his lips! Of course this girl was to be taken in among the Pallisers and treated with an idolatrous love,—as perfect as though "all the blood of all the Howards" were running in her veins. What further inch of ground was there for a fight? And if the fight were over, why should he rob his boy of one sparkle from off the joy of his triumph? Silverbridge was now standing before him abashed by that plaint, inwardly sustained, no doubt, by the conviction of his great success, but subdued by his father's wailing. "However,—perhaps we had better let that pass," said the Duke, with a long sigh. Then Silverbridge took his father's hand, and

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looked up in his face. "I most sincerely hope that she may make you a good and loving wife," said the Duke, "and that she may do her duty by you in that not easy sphere of life to which she will be called."

"I am quite sure she will," said Silverbridge, whose ideas as to Isabel's duties were confined at present to a feeling that she would now have to give him kisses without stint.

"What I have seen of her personally recommends her to me," said the Duke. "Some girls are fools——"

"That 's quite true, sir."

"Who think that the world is to be nothing but dancing, and going to parties."

"Many have been doing it for so many years," said Silverbridge, "that they can't understand that there should be an end of it."

"A wife ought to feel the great responsibility of her position. I hope she will."

"And the sooner she begins, the better," said Silverbridge stoutly.

"And now," said the Duke, looking at his watch, "we might as well have lunch and go down to the House. I will walk with you if you please. It will be about time for each of us." Then the son was forced to go down and witness the somewhat faded ceremony of seeing Parliament opened by three lords sitting in commission before the throne. Whereas but for such stress as his father had laid upon him, he would have disregarded his parliamentary duties and have rushed at once up to Brook Street. As it was, he was so handed over from one political pundit to another, was so button-holed by Sir Timothy, so chaffed as to the address by Phineas Finn, and at last so occupied

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with the whole matter that he was compelled to sit in his place till he had heard Nidderdale make his speech. This the young Scotch lord did so well, and received so much praise for the doing of it, and looked so well in his uniform, that Silverbridge almost regretted the opportunity he had lost. At seven the sitting was over, the speeches, though full of interest, having been shorter than usual. They had been full of interest, but nobody understood in the least what was going to happen. "I don't know anything about the Prime Minister," said Mr. Lupton as he left the House with our hero and another not very staunch supporter of the Government, "but I 'll back Sir Timothy to be the leader of the House on the last day of the session,—against all comers. I don't think it much matters who is Prime Minister now-a-days."

At half-past seven Silverbridge was at the door in Brook Street. Yes; Miss Boncassen was at home. The servant thought that she was upstairs dressing. Then Silverbridge made his way without further invitation into the drawing-room. There he remained alone for ten minutes. At last the door opened, and Mrs. Boncassen entered. "Dear! Lord Silverbridge, who ever dreamed of seeing you? I thought all you Parliament gentlemen were going through your ceremonies. Isabel had a ticket and went down, and saw your father."

"Where is Isabel?"

"She 's gone."

"Gone! Where on earth has she gone to?" asked Silverbridge, as though fearing lest she had been already carried off to the other side of the Atlantic. Then Mrs. Boncassen explained. Within the last

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three minutes Mrs. Montacute Jones had called and carried Isabel off to the play. Mrs. Jones was up in town for a week and this had been a very old engagement. "I hope you did not want her very particularly," said Mrs. Boncassen.

"But I did,—most particularly," said Lord Silverbridge. The door was opened and Mr. Boncassen entered the room. "I beg your pardon for coming at such a time," said the lover, "but I did so want to see Isabel."

"I rather think she wants to see you," said the father.

"I shall go to the theatre after her."

"That might be awkward,—particularly as I doubt whether anybody knows what theatre they are gone to. Can I receive a message for her, my lord?" This was certainly not what Lord Silverbridge had intended. "You know, perhaps, that I have seen the Duke."

"Oh yes;—and I have seen him. Everything is settled."

"That is the only message she will want to hear when she comes home. She is a happy girl, and I am proud to think that I should live to call such a grand young Briton as you my son-in-law." Then the American took the young man's two hands and shook them cordially, while Mrs. Boncassen, bursting into tears, insisted on kissing him.

"Indeed she is a happy girl," said she; "but I hope Isabel won't be carried away too high and mighty."

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CHAPTER XIX.

CARLTON TERRACE.

THREE days after this it was arranged that Isabel should be taken to Carlton Terrace to be accepted there into the full good graces of her future father-in-law, and to go through the pleasant ceremony of seeing the house in which it was to be her destiny to live as mistress. What can be more interesting to a girl than this first visit to her future home? And now Isabel Boncassen was to make her first visit to the house in Carlton Terrace, which the Duke had already declared his purpose of surrendering to the young couple. She was going among very grand things,—so grand that those whose affairs in life are less magnificent may think that her mind should have soared altogether above chairs and tables, and reposed itself among diamonds, gold, and silver ornaments, rich necklaces, the old masters, and alabaster statuary. But dukes and duchesses must sit upon chairs,—or at any rate on sofas,—as well as their poorer brethren, and probably have the same regard for their comfort. Isabel was not above her future furniture, or the rooms that were to be her rooms, or the stairs which she would have to tread, or the pillow on which her head must rest. She had never yet seen even the outside of the house in which she was to live, and was now prepared to make her visit with as much enthusiasm as though

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her future abode was to be prepared for her in a small house in a small street beyond Islington.

But the Duke was, no doubt, more than the house, the father-in-law more than the tables. Isabel, in the ordinary way of society, he had already known almost with intimacy. She, the while, had been well aware that if all things could possibly be made to run smoothly with her, this lordly host, who was so pleasantly courteous to her, would become her father-in-law. But she had known also that he, in his courtesy, had been altogether unaware of any such intention on her part, and that she would now present herself to him in an aspect very different from that in which she had hitherto been regarded. She was well aware that the Duke had not wished to take her into his family,—would not himself have chosen her for his son's wife. She had seen enough to make her sure that he had even chosen another bride for his heir. She had been too clever not to perceive that Lady Mabel Grex had been not only selected,—but almost accepted as though the thing had been certain. She had learned nearly the whole truth from Silverbridge, who was not good at keeping a secret from one to whom his heart was open. That story had been all but read by her with exactness. "I cannot lose you now," she had said to him, leaning on his arm;—"I cannot afford to lose you now. But I fear that some one else is losing you." To this he answered nothing, but simply pressed her closer to his side. "Some one else," she continued, "who perhaps may have reason to think that you have injured her."

"No," he said boldly; "no; there is no such person." For he had never ceased to assure himself that in all that matter with Mabel Grex, he had been guilty

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of no treachery. There had been a moment, indeed, in which she might have taken him; but she had chosen to let it pass from her. All of which, or nearly all of which,—Isabel now saw, and had seen also that the Duke had been a consenting party to that other arrangement. She had reason, therefore, to doubt the manner of her acceptance.

But she had been accepted. She had made such acceptance by him a stipulation in her acceptance of his son. She was sure of the ground on which she trod and was determined to carry herself, if not with pride, yet with dignity. There might be difficulties before her, but it should not be her fault if she were not as good a countess, and,—when time would have it so,—as good a duchess as another.

The visit was made not quite in the fashion in which Silverbridge himself had wished. His idea had been to call for Isabel in his cab and take her down to Carlton Terrace. "Mother must go with me," she had said. Then he looked blank,—as he could look when he was disappointed, as he had looked when she would not talk to him at the lunch, when she told him that it was not her business to entertain him. "Don't be selfish," she added, laughing. "Do you think that mother will not want to have seen the house that I am to live in?"

"She shall come afterwards as often as she likes."

"What,—paying me morning visits from New York! She must come now, if you please. Love me, love my mother."

"I am awfully fond of her," said Silverbridge, who felt that he really had behaved well to the old lady.

"So am I,—and therefore she shall go and see the house now. You are as good as gold,—and do every-

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thing just as I tell you. But a good time is coming, when I shall have to do everything that you tell me." Then it was arranged that Mrs. and Miss Boncassen were to be taken down to the house in their own carriage, and were to be received at the door by Lord Silverbridge.

Another arrangement had also been made. Isabel was to be taken to the Duke immediately upon her arrival, and to be left for a while with him alone, so that he might express himself as he might find fit to do to this newly adopted child. It was a matter to him of such importance that nothing remaining to him in his life could equal it. It was not simply that she was to be the wife of his son,—though that in itself was a consideration very sacred. Had it been Gerald who was bringing to him a bride, the occasion would have had less of awe. But this girl, this American girl, was to be the mother and grandmother of future Dukes of Omnium,—the ancestress, it was to be hoped, of all future Dukes of Omnium! By what she might be, by what she might have in her of mental fibre, of high or low quality, of true or untrue womanliness, were to be fashioned those who in days to come might be amongst the strongest and most faithful bulwarks of the Constitution. An England without a Duke of Omnium,—or at any rate without any duke,—what would it be? And yet he knew that with bad dukes, his country would be in worse stress than though she had none at all. An aristocracy;—yes; but an aristocracy that shall be of the very best! He believed himself thoroughly in his order; but if his order, or many of his order, should become as was now Lord Grex, then he thought that his order not only must go to the wall,

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but that, in the cause of humanity, it had better do so. With all this daily, hourly, always in his mind, this matter in the choice of a wife for his heir was to him of solemn importance.

When they arrived, Silverbridge was there and led them first of all into the dining-room. "My!" said Mrs. Boncassen, as she looked around her. "I thought that our Fifth Avenue parlours whipped everything in the way of city houses."

"What a nice little room for Darby and Joan to sit down to eat a mutton-chop in," said Isabel.

"It 's a beastly great barrack," said Silverbridge;—"but the best of it is that we never use it. We 'll have a cosy little place for Darby and Joan;—you 'll see. Now come to the governor. I 've got to leave you with him."

"Oh me! I am in such a fright."

"He can't eat you," said Mrs. Boncassen.

"And he won't even bite," said Silverbridge.

"I should not mind that because I could bite again. But if he looks as though he thought I should n't do, I shall drop."

"My belief is that he 's almost as much in love with you as I am," said Silverbridge, as he took her to the door of the Duke's room. "Here we are, sir."

"My dear," said the Duke, rising up and coming to her, "I am very glad to see you. It is good of you to come to me." Then he took her in both his hands and kissed her forehead and her lips. She, as she put her face up to him, stood quite still in his embrace, but her eyes were bright with pleasure.

"Shall I leave her?" said Silverbridge.

"For a few minutes."

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"Don't keep her too long, for I want to take her all over the house."

"A few minutes,—and then I will bring her up to the drawing-room." Upon this the door was closed, and Isabel was alone with her new father. "And so, my dear, you are to be my child."

"If you will have me."

"Come here and sit down by me. Your father has already told you that;—has he not?"

"He has told me that you had consented."

"And Silverbridge has said as much?"

"I would sooner hear it from you than from either of them."

"Then hear it from me. You shall be my child. And if you will love me you shall be very dear to me. You shall be my own child,—as dear as my own. I must either love his wife very dearly, or else I must be an unhappy man. And she must love me dearly, or I must be unhappy."

"I will love you," she said, pressing his hand.

"And now let me say some few words to you,—only let there be no bitterness in them to your young heart. When I say that I take you to my heart, you may be sure that I do so thoroughly. You shall be as dear to me and as near as though you had been all English."

"Shall I?"

"There shall no difference be made. My boy's wife shall be my daughter in very deed. But I had not wished it to be so."

"I knew that;—but could I have given him up?"

"He, at any rate, could not give you up. There were little prejudices;—you can understand that."

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"Oh yes."

"We who wear black coats could not bring ourselves readily to put on scarlet garments; nor should we sit comfortably with our legs crossed like Turks."

"I am your scarlet coat and your cross-legged Turk," she said, with feigned self-reproach in her voice, but with a sparkle of mirth in her eye.

"But when I have once got into my scarlet coat I can be very proud of it, and when I am once seated in my divan I shall find it of all postures the easiest. Do you understand me?"

"I think so."

"Not a shade of any prejudice shall be left to darken my mind. There shall be no feeling but that you are in truth his chosen wife. After all neither can country, nor race, nor rank, nor wealth, make a good woman. Education can do much. But nature must have done much also."

"Do not expect too much of me."

"I will so expect that all shall be taken for the best. You know, I think, that I have liked you since I first saw you."

"I know that you have always been good to me."

"I have liked you from the first. That you are lovely perhaps is no merit;—though, to speak the truth, I am well pleased that Silverbridge should have found so much beauty."

"That is all a matter of taste, I suppose," she said, laughing.

"But there is much that a young woman may do for herself which I think you have done. A silly girl, though she had been a second Helen, would hardly have satisfied me."

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"Or perhaps him," said Isabel.

"Or him; and it is in that feeling that I find my chief satisfaction,—that he should have had the sense to have liked such a one as you better than others. Now I have said it. As not being one of us, I did at first object to his choice. As being what you are yourself, I am altogether reconciled to it. Do not keep him long waiting."

"I do not think he likes to be kept waiting for anything."

"I dare say not. I dare say not. And now there is one thing else." Then the Duke unlocked a little drawer that was close to his hand, and taking out a ring put it on her finger. It was a bar of diamonds, perhaps a dozen of them, fixed in a little circlet of gold. "This must never leave you," he said.

"It never shall,—having come from you."

"It was the first present that I gave to my wife, and it is the first that I give to you. You may imagine how sacred it is to me. On no other hand could it be worn without something which to me would be akin to sacrilege. Now I must not keep you longer or Silverbridge will be storming about the house. He, of course, will tell me when it is to be; but do not you keep him long waiting." Then he kissed her, and led her up into the drawing-room. When he had spoken a word of greeting to Mrs. Boncassen, he left them to their own devices.

After that they spent the best part of an hour in going over the house;—but even that was done in a manner unsatisfactory to Silverbridge. Wherever Isabel went, there Mrs. Boncassen went also. There might have been some fun in showing even the back kitchens

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to his bride elect, by herself;—but there was none in wandering about those vast underground regions with a stout old lady who was really interested with the cooking apparatus and the washhouses. The bedrooms one after another became tedious to him when Mrs. Boncassen would make communications respecting each of them to her daughter. "That is Gerald's room," said Silverbridge. "You have never seen Gerald. He is such a brick." Mrs. Boncassen was charmed with the whips and sticks and boxing-gloves in Gerald's room, and expressed an opinion that young men in the States mostly carried their knickknacks about with them to the universities. When she was told that he had another collection of "knickknacks" at Matching, and another at Oxford, she thought that he was a very extravagant young man. Isabel, who had heard all about the gambling in Scotland, looked round at her lover and smiled.

"Well, my dear," said Mrs. Boncassen, as they took their leave, "it is a very grand house, and I hope with all my heart you may have your health there and be happy. But I don't know that you 'll be any happier because it 's so big."

"Wait till you see Gatherum," said Silverbridge. "That, I own, does make me unhappy. It has been calculated that three months at Gatherum Castle would drive a philosopher mad."

In all this there had been a certain amount of disappointment for Silverbridge; but on that evening, before dinner in Brook Street, he received compensation. As the day was one somewhat peculiar in its nature he decided that it should be kept altogether as a holiday and he did not therefore go down to the House.

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And not going to the House, of course he spent the time with the Boncassens. "You know you ought to go," Isabel said to him when they found themselves alone together in the back drawing-room.

"Of course I ought."

"Then go. Do you think I would keep a Briton from his duties?"

"Not though the Constitution should fall in ruins. Do you suppose that a man wants no rest after inspecting all the pots and pans in that establishment? A woman, I believe, could go on doing that kind of thing all day long."

"You should remember at least that the—woman—was interesting herself about your pots and pans."

"And now, Bella, tell me what the governor said to you." Then she showed him the ring. "Did he give you that?" She nodded her head in assent. "I did not think he would ever have parted with that."

"It was your mother's."

"She wore it always. I almost think that I never saw her hand without it. He would not have given you that unless he had meant to be very good to you."

"He was very good to me. Silverbridge, I have a great deal to do, to learn to be your wife."

"I 'll teach you."

"Yes; you 'll teach me. But will you teach me right? There is something almost awful in your father's serious dignity and solemn appreciation of the responsibilities of his position. Will you ever come to that?"

"I shall never be a great man as he is."

"It seems to me that life to him is a load;—which he does not object to carry, but which he knows must be carried with a great struggle."

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"I suppose it ought to be so with every one."

"Yes," she said, "but the higher you put your foot on the ladder the more constant should be your thought that your stepping requires care. I fear that I am climbing too high."

"You can't come down now, my young woman."

"I have to go on now,—and do it as best I can. I will try to do my best. I will try to do my best. I told him so, and now I tell you so. I will try to do my best."

"Perhaps after all I am only a 'pert poppet,'" she said half an hour afterwards, for Silverbridge had told her of that terrible mistake made by poor Dolly Longstaff.

"Brute!" he exclaimed.

"Not at all. And when we are settled down in the real Darby-and-Joan way I shall hope to see Mr. Longstaff very often. I dare say he won't call me a pert poppet, and I shall not remind him of the word. But I shall always think of it; and remembering the way in which my character struck an educated Englishman,—who was not altogether ill-disposed towards me,—I may hope to improve myself."

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CHAPTER XX.

"I HAVE NEVER LOVED YOU."

SILVERBRIDGE had now been in town three or four weeks, and Lady Mabel Grex had also been in London all that time, and yet he had not seen her. She had told him that she loved him and had asked him plainly to make her his wife. He had told her that he could not do so,—that he was altogether resolved to make another woman his wife. Then she had rebuked him, and had demanded from him how he had dared to treat her as he had done. His conscience was clear. He had his own code of morals as to such matters, and had, as he regarded it, kept within the law. But she thought that she was badly treated, and had declared that she was now left out in the cold forever through his treachery. Then her last word had been almost worst of all, "Who can tell what may come to pass?" —showing too plainly that she would not even now give up her hope. Before the month was up she wrote to him as follows:

"Dear Lord Silverbridge,—Why do you not come and see me? Are friends so plentiful with you that one so staunch as I may be thrown over? But of course I know why you do not come. Put all that aside,—and come. I cannot hurt you. I have learned to feel that certain things which the world regards as too awful to be talked of,—except in the way

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of scandal, may be discussed and then laid aside just like other subjects. What though I wear a wig or a wooden leg, I may still be fairly comfortable among my companions unless I crucify myself by trying to hide my misfortune. It is not the presence of the skeleton that crushes us. Not even that will hurt us much if we let him go about the house as he lists. It is the everlasting effort which the horror makes to peep out of his cupboard that robs us of our ease. At any rate, come and see me.

"Of course I know that you are to be married to Miss Boncassen. Who does not know it? The trumpeters have been at work for the last week.

"Your very sincere friend,

"MABEL."

He wished that she had not written. Of course he must go to her. And though there was a word or two in her letter which angered him, his feelings towards her were kindly. Had not that American angel flown across the Atlantic to his arms he could have been well content to make her his wife. But the interview at the present moment could hardly be other than painful. She could, she said, talk of her own misfortunes, but the subject would be very painful to him. It was not to him a skeleton, to be locked out of sight; but it had been a misfortune, and the sooner that such misfortunes could be forgotten the better.

He knew what she meant about trumpeters. She had intended to signify that Isabel in her pride had boasted of her matrimonial prospects. Of course there had been trumpets. Are there not always trumpets when a marriage is contemplated, magnificent enough

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to be called an alliance? As for that he himself had blown the trumpets. He had told everybody that he was going to be married to Miss Boncassen. Isabel had blown no trumpets. In her own straightforward way she had told the truth to whom it concerned. Of course he would go and see Lady Mabel, but he trusted that for her own sake nothing would be said about trumpets.

"So you have come at last," Mabel said when he entered the room. "No;—Miss Cassewary is not here. As I wanted to see you alone I got her to go out this morning. Why did you not come before?"

"You said in your letter that you knew why."

"But in saying so I was accusing you of cowardice;—was I not?"

"It was not cowardice."

"Why, then, did you not come?"

"I thought you would hardly wish to see me so soon,—after what passed."

"That is honest, at any rate. You felt that I must be too much ashamed of what I said to be able to look you in the face."

"Not that exactly."

"Any other man would have felt the same, but no other man would be honest enough to tell me so. I do not think that ever in your life you have constrained yourself to the civility of a lie."

"I hope not."

"To be civil and false is often better than to be harsh and true. I may be soothed by the courtesy and yet not deceived by the lie. But, what I told you in my letter,—which I hope you have destroyed——"

"I will destroy it."

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"Do. It was not intended for the partner of your future joys. As I told you then, I can talk freely. Why not? We know it,—both of us. How your conscience may be I cannot tell; but mine is clear from that soil with which you think it should be smirched."

"I think nothing of the sort."

"Yes, Silverbridge, you do. You have said to yourself this;—That girl has determined to get me, and she has not scrupled as to how she would do it."

"No such idea has ever crossed my mind."

"But you have never told yourself of the encouragement which you gave me. Such condemnation as I have spoken of would have been just if my efforts had been sanctioned by no words, no looks, no deeds from you. Did you not give me warrant for thinking that you were my lover?"

That theory by which he had justified himself to himself seemed to fall away from him under her questioning. He could not now remember his words to her in those old days before Miss Boncassen had crossed his path; but he did know that he had once intended to make her understand that he loved her. She had not understood him;—or understanding, had not accepted his words; and therefore he had thought himself free. But now it seemed that he had not been entitled so to regard himself. There she sat, looking at him, waiting for his answer; and he who had been so sure that he had committed no sin against her, had not a word to say to her.

"I want your answer to that, Lord Silverbridge. I have told you that I would have no skeleton in the cupboard. Down at Matching, and before that at

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Killancodlem, I appealed to you, asking you to take me as your wife."

"Hardly that."

"Altogether that! I will have nothing denied that I have done,—nor will I be ashamed of anything. I did do so,—even after this infatuation. I thought then that one so volatile might perhaps fly back again."

"I shall not do that," said he, frowning at her.

"You need trouble yourself with no assurance, my friend. Let us understand each other now. I am not now supposing that you can fly back again. You have found your perch, and you must settle on it like a good domestic barn-door fowl." Again he scowled.

If she were too hard upon him he would certainly turn upon her. "No; you will not fly back again now;—but was I, or was I not, justified when you came to Killancodlem in thinking that my lover had come there?"

"How can I tell? It is my own justification I am thinking of."

"I see all that. But we cannot both be justified. Did you mean me to suppose that you were speaking to me words in earnest when there,—sitting in that very spot,—you spoke to me of your love?"

"Did I speak of my love?"

"Did you speak of your love! And now, Silverbridge,—for if there be an English gentleman on earth I think that you are one,—as a gentleman tell me this. Did you not even tell your father that I should be your wife? I know you did."

"Did he tell you?"

"Men such as you and he, who cannot even lie with your eyelids, who will not condescend to cover

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up a secret by a moment of feigned inanimation, have many voices. He did tell me; but he broke no confidence. He told me, but did not mean to tell me. Now you also have told me."

"I did. I told him so. And then I changed my mind."

"I know you changed your mind. Men often do. A pinker pink, a whiter white,—a finger that will press you just half an ounce the closer,—a cheek that will consent to let itself come just a little nearer——!"

"No; no; no!" It was because Isabel had not easily consented to such approaches!

"Trifles such as these will do it;—and some such trifles have done it with you. It would be beneath me to make comparisons where I might seem to be the gainer. I grant her beauty. She is very lovely. She has succeeded."

"I have succeeded."

"But—I am justified, and you are condemned. Is it not so? Tell me like a man."

"You are justified."

"And you are condemned? When you told me that I should be your wife, and then told your father the same story, was I to think it all meant nothing? Have you deceived me?"

"I did not mean it."

"Have you deceived me? What; you cannot deny it, and you have not the manliness to own it to a poor woman who can only save herself from humiliation by extorting the truth from you!"

"Oh, Mabel, I am so sorry it should be so."

"I believe you are,—with a sorrow that will last till she is again sitting close to you. Nor, Silverbridge, do

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I wish it to be longer. No;—no;—no. Your fault after all has not been great. You deceived, but did not mean to deceive me."

"Never; never."

"And I fancy you have never known how much you bore about with you. Your modesty has been so perfect that you have not thought of yourself as more than other men. You have forgotten that you have had in your hand the disposal to some one woman of a throne in Paradise."

"I don't suppose you thought of that."

"But I did. Why should I tell falsehoods now. I have determined that you should know everything,—but I could better confess to you my own sins when I had shown that you too have not been innocent. Not think of it! Do not men think of high titles and great wealth and power and place? And if men, why should not women? Do not men try to get them;—and are they not even applauded for their energy? A woman has but one way to try. I tried."

"I do not think it was all for that."

"How shall I answer that without a confession which even I am not hardened enough to make? In truth, Silverbridge, I have never loved you."

He drew himself up slowly before he answered her, and gradually assumed a look very different from that easy boyish smile which was customary to him. "I am glad of that," he said.

"Why are you glad?"

"Now I can have no regrets."

"You need have none. It was necessary to me that I should have my little triumph;—that I should show you that I knew how far you had wronged me! But

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now I wish that you should know everything. I have never loved you."

"There is an end of it then."

"But I have liked you so well,—so much better than all others! A dozen men have asked me to marry them. And though they might be nothing till they made that request, then they became—things of horror to me. But you were not a thing of horror. I could have become your wife, and I think that I could have learned to love you."

"It is best as it is."

"I ought to say so too; but I have a doubt. I should have liked to be Duchess of Omnium, and perhaps I might have liked the place better than one who can as yet know but little of the duties or its privileges. I may, perhaps, think that that other arrangement would have been better even for you."

"I can take care of myself in that."

"I should have married you without loving you, but I should have done so determined to serve you with a devotion which a woman who does love hardly thinks necessary. I would have so done my duty that you should never have guessed that my heart had been in the keeping of another man."

"Another man!"

"Yes; of course. If there had been no other man, why not you? Am I so hard, do you think that I can love no one? Are not you such a one that a girl would naturally love,—were she not preoccupied? That a woman should love seems as necessary as that a man should not."

"A man can love too."

"No;—hardly. He can admire, and he can like,

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and he can fondle and be fond. He can admire, and approve, and perhaps worship. He can know of a woman that she is part of himself, the most sacred part, and therefore will protect her from the very winds. But all that will not make love. It does not come to a man that to be separated from a woman is to be dislocated from his very self. A man has but one centre, and that is himself. A woman has two. Though the second may never be seen by her, may live in the arms of another, may do all for that other that man can do for woman,—still, still, though he be half the globe asunder from her, still he is to her the half of her existence. If she really love, there is, I fancy, no end of it. To the end of time I shall love Frank Tregear."

"Tregear!"

"Who else?"

"He is engaged to Mary."

"Of course he is. Why not;—to her or whomsoever else he might like best? He is as true I doubt not to your sister as you are to your American beauty,—or as you would have been to me had fancy held. He used to love me."

"You were always friends."

"Always;—dear friends. And he would have loved me if a man were capable of loving. But he could sever himself from me easily, just when he was told to do so. I thought that I could do the same. But I cannot. A jackal is born a jackal, and not a lion, and cannot help himself. So is a woman born—a woman. They are clinging, parasite things, which cannot but adhere; though they destroy themselves by adhering. Do not suppose that I take a pride in it. I would give one of my eyes to be able to disregard him."

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"Time will do it."

"Yes; time,—that brings wrinkles and rouge-pots and rheumatism. Though I have so hated those men as to be unable to endure them, still I want some man's house, and his name,—some man's bread and wine,—some man's jewels and titles and woods and parks and gardens,—if I can get them. Time can help a man in his sorrow. If he begins at forty to make speeches, or to win races, or to breed oxen, he can yet live a prosperous life. Time is but a poor consoler for a young woman who has to be married."

"Oh, Mabel."

"And now let there be not a word more about it. I know—that I can trust you."

"Indeed you may."

"Though you will tell her everything else you will not tell her this."

"No;—not this."

"And surely you will not tell your sister!"

"I shall tell no one."

"It is because you are so true that I have dared to trust you. I had to justify myself,—and then to confess. Had I at that one moment taken you at your word, you would never have known anything of all this. 'There is a tide in the affairs of men——.' But I let the flood go by! I shall not see you again now before you are married; but come to me afterwards."

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CHAPTER XXI.

"LET US DRINK A GLASS OF WINE TOGETHER."

SILVERBRIDGE pondered it all much as he went home. What a terrible story was that he had heard! The horror to him was chiefly in this,—that she should yet be driven to marry some man without even fancying that she could love him! And this was Lady Mabel Grex, who, on his own first entrance into London life, now not much more than twelve months ago, had seemed to him to stand above all other girls in beauty, charm, and popularity!

As he opened the door of the house with his latch-key, who should be coming out but Frank Tregear,—Frank Tregear with his arm in a sling, but still with an unmistakable look of general satisfaction. "When on earth did you come up?" asked Silverbridge. Tregear told him that he had arrived on the previous evening from Harrington. "And why? The doctor would not have let you come if he could have helped it."

"When he found he could not help it, he did let me come. I am nearly all right. If I had been nearly all wrong I should have had to come."

"And what are you doing here?"

"Well; if you 'll allow me I 'll go back with you for a moment. What do you think I have been doing?"

"Have you seen my sister?"

"Yes, I have seen your sister. And I have done

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better than that. I have seen your father. Lord Silverbridge,—behold your brother-in-law."

"You don't mean to say that it is arranged?"

"I do."

"What did he say?"

"He made me understand by most unanswerable arguments, that I had no business to think of such a thing. I did not fight the point with him,—but simply stood there, as conclusive evidence of my business. He told me that we should have nothing to live on unless he gave us an income. I assured him that I would never ask him for a shilling. 'But I cannot allow her to marry a man without an income,' he said."

"I know his way so well."

"I had just two facts to go upon,—that I would not give her up, and that she would not give me up. When I pointed that out he tore his hair,—in a mild way, and said that he did not understand that kind of thing at all."

"And yet he gave way."

"Of course he did. They say that when a king of old would consent to see a petitioner for his life, he was bound by his royalty to mercy. So it was with the Duke. Then, very early in the argument, he forgot himself, and called her—Mary. I knew he had thrown up the sponge then."

"How did he give way at last?"

"He asked me what were my ideas about life in general. I said that I thought Parliament was a good sort of thing, that I was lucky enough to have a seat, and that I should take lodgings somewhere in Westminster till——. 'Till what?' he asked. 'Till something is settled,' I replied. Then he turned away from

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me and remained silent. 'May I see Lady Mary?' I asked. 'Yes; you may see her,' he replied, as he rang the bell. Then when the servant was gone he stopped me. 'I love her too dearly to see her grieve,' he said. 'I hope you will show that you can be worthy of her.' Then I made some sort of protestation and went upstairs. While I was with Mary there came a message to me, telling me to come to dinner."

"The Boncassens are all dining here."

"Then we shall be a family party. So far I suppose I may say it is settled. When he will let us marry, Heaven only knows. Mary declares that she will not press him. I certainly cannot do so. It is all a matter of money."

"He won't care about that."

"But he may perhaps think that a little patience will do us good. You will have to soften him." Then Silverbridge told all that he knew about himself. He was to be married in May, was to go to Matching for a week or two after his wedding, was then to see the session to an end, and after that to travel with his wife in the United States. "I don't suppose we shall be allowed to run about the world together as soon as that," said Tregear, "but I am too well satisfied with my day's work to complain."

"Did he say what he meant to give her?"

"Oh dear, no;—nor even that he meant to give her anything. I should not dream of asking a question about it. Nor when he makes any proposition shall I think of having any opinion of my own."

"He 'll make it all right;—for her sake, you know."

"My chief object as regards him is, that he should not think that I have been looking after her money.

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Well; good-bye. I suppose we shall all meet at dinner?"

When Tregear left him Silverbridge went to his father's room. He was anxious that they should understand each other as to Mary's engagement. "I thought you were at the House," said the Duke.

"I was going there, but I met Tregear at the door. He tells me you have accepted him for Mary."

"I wish that he had never seen her. Do you think that a man can be thwarted in everything and not feel it?"

"I thought—you had reconciled yourself—to Isabel."

"If it were that alone I could do so the more easily, because personally she wins upon me. And this man, too;—it is not that I find fault with himself."

"He is in all respects a high-minded gentleman."

"I hope so. But yet, had he a right to set his heart here, where the could make his fortune,—having none of his own?"

"He did not think of that."

"He should have thought of it. A man does not allow himself to love without any consideration or purpose. You say that he is a gentleman. A gentleman should not look to live on means brought to him by a wife. You say that he did not."

"He did not think of it."

"A gentleman should do more than not think of it, He should think that it shall not be so. A man should own his means or should earn them."

"How many men, sir, do neither?"

"Yes; I know," said the Duke. "Such a doctrine

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now-a-days is caviare to the general. One must live as others live around one, I suppose. I could not see her suffer. It was too much for me. When I became convinced that this was no temporary passion, no romantic love which time might banish, that she was of such a temperament that she could not change,—then I had to give way. Gerald, I suppose, will bring me some kitchen-maid for his wife."

"Oh, sir, you should not say that to me."

"No;—I should not have said it to you. I beg your pardon, Silverbridge." Then he paused a moment, turning over certain thoughts within his own bosom. "Perhaps, after all, it is well that a pride of which I am conscious should be rebuked. And it may be that the rebuke has come in such a form that I should be thankful. I know that I can love Isabel."

"That to me will be everything."

"And this young man has nothing that should revolt me. I think he has been wrong. But now that I have said it I will let all that pass from me. He will dine with us to-day."

Silverbridge then went up to see his sister. "So you have settled your little business, Mary."

"Oh, Silverbridge, you will wish me joy?"

"Certainly. Why not?"

"Papa is so stern with me. Of course he has given way, and of course I am grateful. But he looks at me as though I had done something to be forgiven."

"Take the good the gods provide you, Mary. That will all come right."

"But I have not done anything wrong. Have I?"

"That is a matter of opinion. How can I answer

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about you when I don't quite know whether I have done anything wrong or not myself. I am going to marry the girl I have chosen. That 's enough for me."

"But you did change."

"We need not say anything about that."

"But I have never changed. Papa just told me that he would consent, and that I might write to him. So I did write, and he came. But papa looks at me as though I had broken his heart."

"I tell you what it is, Mary. You expect too much from him. He has not had his own way with either of us, and of course he feels it."

As Tregear had said, there was quite a family party in Carlton Terrace, though as yet the family was not bound together by family ties. All the Boncassens were there, the father, the mother, and the promised bride. Mr. Boncassen bore himself with more ease than any one in the company, having at his command a gift of manliness which enabled him to regard this marriage exactly as he would have done any other. America was not so far distant but what he would be able to see his girl occasionally. He liked the young man and he believed in the comfort of wealth. Therefore he was satisfied. But when the marriage was spoken of, or written of, as "an alliance," then he would say a hard word or two about dukes and lords in general. On such an occasion as this he was happy and at his ease.

So much could not be said for his wife, with whom the Duke attempted to place himself on terms of family equality. But in doing this he failed to hide the attempt even from her, and she broke down under it. Had he simply walked into the room with her as

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he would have done on any other occasion, and then remarked that the frost was keen or the thaw disagreeable, it would have been better for her. But when he told her that he hoped she would often make herself at home in that house, and looked, as he said it, as though he were asking her to take a place among the goddesses of Olympus, she was troubled as to her answer. "Oh, my Lord Duke," she said, "when I think of Isabel living here and being called by such a name, it almost upsets me."

Isabel had all her father's courage, but she was more sensitive; and though she would have borne her honours well, was oppressed by the feeling that the weight was too much for her mother. She could not keep her ear from listening to her mother's words, or her eye from watching her mother's motions. She was prepared to carry her mother everywhere. "As other girls have to be taken with their belongings, so must I, if I be taken at all." This she had said plainly enough. There should be no division between her and her mother. But still, knowing that her mother was not quite at ease, she was hardly at ease herself.

Silverbridge came in at the last moment, and of course occupied a chair next to Isabel. As the House was sitting, it was natural that he should come up in a flurry. "I left Phineas," he said, "pounding away in his old style at Sir Timothy. By-the-bye, Isabel, you must come down some day and hear Sir Timothy badgered. I must be back again about ten. Well, Gerald, how are they all at Lazarus?" He made an effort to be free and easy, but even he soon found that it was an effort.

Gerald had come up from Oxford for the occasion

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that he might make acquaintance with the Boncassens. He had taken Isabel in to dinner, but had been turned out of his place when his brother came in. He had been a little confused by the first impression made upon him by Mrs. Boncassen, and had involuntarily watched his father. "Silver is going to have an odd sort of a mother-in-law," he said afterwards to Mary, who remarked in reply that this would not signify, as the mother-in-law would be in New York.

Tregear's part was very difficult to play. He could not but feel that though he had succeeded, still he was as yet looked upon askance. Silverbridge had told him that by degrees the Duke would be won round, but that it was not to be expected that he should swallow at once all his regrets. The truth of this could not but be accepted. The immediate inconvenience, however, was not the less felt. Each and every one there knew the position of each and every one;—but Tregear felt it difficult to act up to his. He could not play the well-pleased lover openly, as did Silverbridge. Mary herself was disposed to be very silent. The heart-breaking tedium of her dull life had been removed. Her determination had been rewarded. All that she had wanted had been granted to her, and she was happy. But she was not prepared to show off her happiness before others. And she was aware that she was thought to have done evil by introducing her lover into her august family.

But it was the Duke who made the greatest efforts, and with the least success. He had told himself again and again that he was bound by every sense of duty to swallow all regrets. He had taken himself to task on this matter. He had done so even out loud to his

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son. He had declared that he would "let it all pass from him." But who does not know how hard it is for a man in such matters to keep his word to himself? Who has not said to himself at the very moment of his own delinquency, "now,—it is now,—at this very instant of time, that I should crush, and quench, and kill the evil spirit within me; it is now that I should abate my greed, or smother my ill-humour, or abandon my hatred. It is now, and here, that I should drive out the fiend, as I have sworn to myself that I would do," —and yet has failed.

That it would be done, would be done at last, by this man was very certain. When Silverbridge assured his sister that "it would come all right very soon," he had understood his father's character. But it could not be completed quite at once. Had he been required to take Isabel only to his heart, it would have been comparatively easy. There are men, who do not seem at first sight very susceptible to feminine attractions, who nevertheless are dominated by the grace of flounces, who succumb to petticoats unconsciously, and who are half in love with every woman merely for her womanhood. So it was with the Duke. He had given way in regard to Isabel with less than half the effort that Frank Tregear was like to cost him.

"You were not at the House, sir," said Silverbridge when he felt that there was a pause.

"No, not to-day." Then there was a pause again.

"I think that we shall beat Cambridge this year to a moral," said Gerald, who was sitting at the round table opposite to his father. Mr. Boncassen, who was next him, asked, in irony probably rather than in ignorance, whether the victory was to be achieved by

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mathematical or classical proficiency. Gerald turned and looked at him. "Do you mean to say that you never heard of the university boat-races?"

"Papa, you have disgraced yourself forever," said Isabel.

"Have I, my dear? Yes, I have heard of them. But I thought Lord Gerald's protestation was too great for a mere aquatic triumph."

"Now you are poking your fun at me," said Gerald.

"Well he may," said the Duke sententiously. "We have laid ourselves very open to having fun poked at us in this matter."

"I think, sir," said Tregear, "that they are learning to do the same sort of thing at the American universities."

"Oh, indeed," said the Duke in a solemn, dry, funereal tone. And then all the little life which Gerald's remark about the boat-race had produced was quenched at once. The Duke was not angry with Tregear for his little word of defence,—but he was not able to bring himself into harmony with this one guest, and was almost savage to him without meaning it. He was continually asking himself why Destiny had been so hard upon him as to force him to receive there at his table as his son-in-law a man who was distasteful to him. And he was endeavouring to answer the question, taking himself to task and telling himself that his destiny had done him no injury, and that the pride which had been wounded was a false pride. He was making a brave fight; but during the fight he was hardly fit to be the genial father and father-in-law of young people who were going to be married to one another. But before the dinner was over he made a

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great effort. "Tregear," he said,—and even that was an effort, for he had never hitherto mentioned the man's name without the formal Mister, "Tregear, as this is the first time you have sat at my table, let me be old-fashioned, and ask you to drink a glass of wine with me."

The glass of wine was drunk and the ceremony afforded infinite satisfaction at least to one person there. Mary could not keep herself from some expression of joy by pressing her finger for a moment against her lover's arm. He, though not usually given to such manifestations, blushed up to his eyes. But the feeling produced on the company was solemn rather than jovial. Every one there understood it all. Mr. Boncassen could read the Duke's mind down to the last line. Even Mrs. Boncassen was aware that an act of reconciliation had been intended. "When the governor drank that glass of wine it seemed as though half the marriage ceremony had been performed," Gerald said to his brother that evening. When the Duke's glass was replaced upon the table, he himself was conscious of the solemnity of what he had done, and was half ashamed of it. When the ladies had gone upstairs the conversation became political and lively. The Duke could talk freely about the state of things to Mr. Boncassen, and was able gradually to include Tregear in the badinage with which he attacked the conservatism of his son. And so the half hour passed well. Upstairs the two girls immediately came together, leaving Mrs. Boncassen to chew the cud of the grandeur around her in the sleepy comfort of an armchair. "And so everything is settled for both of us," said Isabel.

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"Of course I knew it was to be settled for you. You told me so at Custins."

"I did not know it myself then. I only told you that he had asked me. And you hardly believed me."

"I certainly believed you."

"But you knew about—Lady Mabel Grex."

"I only suspected something, and now I know it was a mistake. It has never been more than suspicion."

"And why, when we were at Custins, did you not tell me about yourself?"

"I had nothing to tell."

"I can understand that. But is it not joyful that it should all be settled? Only poor Lady Mabel! You have got no Lady Mabel to trouble your conscience." From which it was evident that Silverbridge had not told all.

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CHAPTER XXII.

THE MAJOR'S STORY.

By the end of March Isabel was in Paris, whither she had forbidden her lover to follow her. Silverbridge was therefore reduced to the shifts of a bachelor's life, in which his friends seemed to think that he ought now to take special delight. Perhaps he did not take much delight in them. He was no doubt impatient to commence that steady married life for which he had prepared himself. But nevertheless, just at present, he lived a good deal at the Beargarden. Where was he to live? The Boncassens were in Paris, his sister was at Matching with a house full of other Pallisers, and his father was again deep in politics.

Of course he was much in the House of Commons, but that also was stupid. Indeed everything would be stupid till Isabel came back. Perhaps dinner was more comfortable at the club than at the House. And then, as everybody knew, it was a good thing to change the scene. Therefore he dined at the club, and though he would keep his hansom and go down to the House again in the course of the evening, he spent many long hours at the Beargarden. "There 'll very soon be an end of this as far as you are concerned," said Mr. Lupton to him one evening as they were sitting in the smoking-room after dinner.

"The sooner the better as far as this place is concerned."

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"The place is as good as any other. For the matter of that I like the Beargarden since we got rid of two or three not very charming characters."

"You mean my poor friend Tifto," said Silverbridge.

"No;—I was not thinking of Tifto. There were one or two here who were quite as bad as Tifto. I wonder what has become of that poor devil?"

"I don't know in the least. You heard of that row about the hounds?"

"And his letter to you."

"He wrote to me,—and I answered him, as you know. But whither he vanished, or what he is doing, or how he is living, I have not the least idea."

"Gone to join those other fellows abroad, I should say. Among them they got a lot of money,—as the Duke ought to remember."

"He is not with them," said Silverbridge, as though he were in some degree mourning over the fate of his unfortunate friend.

"I suppose Captain Green was the leader in all that?"

"Now it is all done and gone I own to a certain regard for the Major. He was true to me till he thought I snubbed him. I would not let him go down to Silverbridge with me. I always thought that I drove the poor Major to his malpractices."

At this moment Dolly Longstaff sauntered into the room and came up to them. It may be remembered that Dolly had declared his purpose of emigrating. As soon as he heard that the Duke's heir had serious thoughts of marrying the lady whom he loved he withdrew at once from the contest, but, as he did so, he acknowledged that there could be no longer a home for him in the country which Isabel was to inhabit as

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the wife of another man. Gradually, however, better thoughts returned to him. After all, what was she but a "pert poppet"? He determined that marriage "clips a fellow's wings confoundedly," and so he set himself to enjoy life after his old fashion. There was perhaps a little swagger as he threw himself into a chair and addressed the happy lover. "I 'll be shot if I did n't meet Tifto at the corner of the street."

"Tifto!"

"Yes, Tifto. He looked awfully seedy, with a great-coat buttoned up to his chin, a shabby hat, and old gloves."

"Did he speak to you?" asked Silverbridge.

"No;—nor I to him. He had n't time to think whether he would speak or not, and you may be sure I did n't."

Nothing further was said about the man, but Silverbridge was uneasy and silent. When his cigar was finished he got up saying that he should go back to the House. As he left the club he looked about him as though expecting to see his old friend, and when he had passed through the first street and had got into the Haymarket there he was! The Major came up to him, touched his hat, asked to be allowed to say a few words. "I don't think it can do any good," said Silverbridge. The man had not attempted to shake hands with him, or affected familiarity; but seemed to be thoroughly humiliated. "I don't think I can be of any service to you, and therefore I had rather decline."

"I don't want you to be of any service, my lord."

"Then what 's the good?"

"I have something to say. May I come to you to-morrow?"

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Then Silverbridge allowed himself to make an appointment, and an hour was named at which Tifto might call in Carlton Terrace He felt that he almost owed some reparation to the wretched man,—whom he had unfortunately admitted among his friends, whom he had used, and to whom he had been uncourteous. Exactly at the hour named the Major was shown into his room.

Dolly had said that he was shabby,—but the man was altered rather than shabby. He still had rings on his fingers and studs in his shirt, and a jewelled pin in his cravat;—but he had shaven off his moustache and the tuft from his chin, and his hair had been cut short, and in spite of his jewellery there was a hang-dog look about him. "I 've got something that I particularly want to say to you, my lord." Silverbridge would not shake hands with him, but could not refrain from offering him a chair.

"Well;—you can say it now."

"Yes;—but it is n't so very easy to be said. There are some things, though you want to say them ever so, you don't quite know how to do it."

"You have your choice, Major Tifto. You can speak or hold your tongue."

Then there was a pause, during which Silverbridge sat with his hands in his pockets trying to look unconcerned. "But if you 've got it here, and feel it as I do,"—the poor man as he said this put his hand upon his heart,—"you can't sleep in your bed till it 's out. I did that thing that they said I did."

"What thing?"

"Why, the nail! It was I lamed the horse."

"I am sorry for it. I can say nothing else."

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"You ain't so sorry for it as I am. Oh no; you can never be that, my lord. After all, what does it matter to you?"

"Very little. I meant that I was sorry for your sake."

"I believe you are, my lord. For though you could be rough you was always kind. Now I will tell you everything, and then you can do as you please."

"I wish to do nothing. As far as I am concerned the matter is over. It made me sick of horses, and I do not wish to have to think of it again."

"Nevertheless, my lord, I 've got to tell it. It was Green who put me up to it. He did it just for the plunder. As God is my judge it was not for the money I did it."

"Then it was revenge."

"It was the devil got hold of me, my lord. Up to that I had always been square,—square as a die! I got to think that your lordship was upsetting. I don't know whether your lordship remembers, but you did put me down once or twice rather uncommon."

"I hope I was not unjust."

"I don't say you was, my lord. But I got a feeling on me that you wanted to get rid of me, and I all the time doing the best I could for the 'orses. I did do the best I could up to that very morning at Doncaster. Well;—it was Green put me up to it. I don't say I was to get nothing; but it was n't so much more than I could have got by the 'orse winning. And I 've lost pretty nearly all that I did get. Do you remember, my lord,"—and now the Major sank his voice to a whisper,—"when I come up to your bedroom that morning?"

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"I remember it."

"The first time?"

"Yes; I remember it."

"Because I came twice, my lord. When I came first it had n't been done. You turned me out."

"That is true, Major Tifto."

"You was very rough then. Was n't you rough?"

"A man's bedroom is generally supposed to be private."

"Yes, my lord,—that 's true. I ought to have sent your man in first. I came then to confess it all, before it was done."

"Then why could n't you let the horse alone?"

"I was in their hands. And then you was so rough with me! So I said to myself, I might as well do it; —and I did it."

"What do you want me to say? As far as my forgiveness goes, you have it."

"That 's saying a great deal, my lord,—a great deal," said Tifto, now in tears. "But I ain't said it all yet. He 's here; in London!"

"Who 's here?"

"Green. He 's here. He does n't think that I know, but I could lay my hand on him to-morrow."

"There is no human being alive, Major Tifto, whose presence or absence could be a matter of more indifference to me."

"I 'll tell you what I 'll do, my lord. I 'll go before any judge, or magistrate, or police officer in the country and tell the truth. I won't ask even for a pardon. They shall punish me and him too. I 'm in that state of mind that any change would be for the better. But he,—he ought to have it heavy."

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"It won't be done by me, Major Tifto. Look here, Major Tifto; you have come here to confess that you have done me a great injury."

"Yes, I have."

"And you say you are sorry for it."

"Indeed I am."

"And I have forgiven you. There is only one way in which you can show your gratitude. Hold your tongue about it. Let it be as a thing done and gone. The money has been paid. The horse has been sold. The whole thing has gone out of my mind, and I don't want to have it brought back again."

"And nothing is to be done to Green!"

"I should say nothing,—on that score."

"And he has got they say £25,000 clear money."

"It is a pity, but it cannot be helped. I will have nothing further to do with it. Of course I cannot bind you, but I have told you my wishes." The poor wretch was silent, but still it seemed as though he did not wish to go quite yet. "If you have said what you have got to say, Major Tifto, I may as well tell you that my time is engaged."

"And must that be all?"

"What else?"

"I am in such a state of mind, Lord Silverbridge, that it would be a satisfaction to tell it all, even against myself."

"I can't prevent you."

Then Tifto got up from his chair, as though he were going. "I wish I knew what I was going to do with myself."

"I don't know that I can help you, Major Tifto."

"I suppose not, my lord. I have n't £20 left in

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all the world. It 's the only thing that was n't square that ever I did in all my life. Your lordship could n't do anything for me. We was very much together at one time, my lord."

"Yes, Major Tifto, we were."

"Of course I was a villain. But it was only once; and your lordship was so rough to me! I am not saying but what I was a villain. Think of what I did for myself by that one piece of wickedness. Master of hounds! member of the club! And the horse would have run in my name and won the Leger! And everybody knew as your lordship and me was together in him!" Then he burst out into a paroxysm of tears and sobbing.

The young lord certainly could not take the man into partnership again, nor could he restore to him either the hounds or his club,—or his clean hands. Nor did he know in what way he could serve the man, except by putting his hand into his pocket,—which he did. Tifto accepted the gratuity, and ultimately became an annual pensioner on his former nobler partner, living on the allowance made him in some obscure corner of South Wales.

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CHAPTER XXIII.

ON DEPORTMENT.

FRANK TREGEAR had come up to town at the end of February. He remained in London, with an understanding that he was not to see Lady Mary again till the Easter holidays. He was then to pay a visit to Matching, and to enter in, it may be presumed, on the full fruition of his advantages as accepted suitor. All this had been arranged with a good deal of precision,—as though there had still been a hope left that Lady Mary might change her mind. Of course there was no such hope. When the Duke asked the young man to dine with him, when he invited him to drink that memorable glass of wine, when the young man was allowed, in the presence of the Boncassens, to sit next Lady Mary, it was of course settled. But the father probably found some relief in yielding by slow degrees. "I would rather that there should be no correspondence till then," he had said both to Tregear and to his daughter. And they had promised there should be no correspondence. At Easter they would meet. After Easter Mary was to come up to London to be present at her brother's wedding, to which also Tregear had been formally invited; and it was hoped that then something might be settled as to their own marriage. Tregear, with the surgeon's permission, took his seat in Parliament. He was introduced by two leading members on the conservative side, but im-

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mediately afterwards found himself seated next to his friend Silverbridge on the top bench behind the Ministers. The House was very full, as there was a feverish report abroad that Sir Timothy Beeswax intended to make a statement. No one quite knew what the statement was to be; but every politician in the House and out of it thought that he knew that the statement would be a bid for higher power on the part of Sir Timothy himself. If there had been dissensions in the Cabinet, the secret of them had been well kept. To Tregear, who was not as yet familiar with the House, there was no special appearance of activity; but Silverbridge could see that there was more than wonted animation. That the Treasury Bench should be full at this time was a thing of custom. A whole broadside of questions would be fired off, one after another, like a rattle of musketry down the ranks, when as nearly as possible the report of each gun is made to follow close upon that of the gun before,—with this exception, that in such case each little sound is intended to be as like as possible to the preceding; whereas with the rattle of the questions and answers, each question and each answer becomes a little more authoritative and less courteous than the last. The Treasury Bench was ready for its usual responsive firing, as the questioners were of course in their places. The opposition front bench was also crowded, and those behind were nearly equally full. There were many peers in the gallery, and a general feeling of sensation prevailed. All this Silverbridge had been long enough in the House to appreciate;—but to Tregear the House was simply the House.

"It 's odd enough we should have a row the very first day you come," said Silverbridge.

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"You think there will be a row?"

"Beeswax has something special to say. He 's not here yet, you see. They 've left about six inches for him there between Roper and Sir Orlando. You 'll have the privilege of looking just down on the top of his head when he does come. I shan't stay much longer after that."

"Where are you going?"

"I don't mean to-day. But I should not have been here now,—in this very place I mean,—but I want to stick to you just at first. I shall move down below the gangway; and not improbably creep over to the other side before long."

"You don't mean it?"

"I think I shall. I begin to feel I 've made a mistake."

"In coming to this side at all."

"I think I have. After all it is not very important."

"What is not important? I think it very important."

"Perhaps it may be to you, and perhaps you may be able to keep it up. But the more I think of it the less excuse I seem to have for deserting the old ways of the family. What is there in those fellows down there to make a fellow feel that he ought to bind himself to them neck and heels?"

"Their principles."

"Yes, their principles! I believe I have some vague idea as to supporting property and land and all that kind of thing. I don't know that anybody wants to attack anything."

"Somebody soon would want to attack it if there were no defenders."

"I suppose there is an outside power,—the people,

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or public opinion, or whatever they choose to call it. And the country will have to go very much as that outside power chooses. Here, in Parliament, everybody will be as conservative as the outside will let them. I don't think it matters on which side you sit;—but it does matter that you should n't have to act with those who go against the grain with you."

"I never heard a worse political argument in my life."

"I dare say not. However, here 's Sir Timothy. When he looks in that way, all buckram, deportment, and solemnity, I know he 's going to pitch into somebody."

At this moment the leader of the House came in from behind the Speaker's chair and took his place between Mr. Roper and Sir Orlando Drought. Silverbridge had been right in saying that Sir Timothy's air was solemn. When a man has to declare a solemn purpose on a solemn occasion in a solemn place, it is needful that he should be solemn himself. And though the solemnity which befits a man best will be that which the importance of the moment may produce, without thought given by himself to his own outward person, still, who is there can refrain himself from some attempt? Who can boast, who that has been versed in the ways and duties of high places, that he has kept himself free from all study of grace, of feature, of attitude, of gait—or even of dress? For most of our bishops, for most of our judges, of our statesmen, our orators, our generals, for many even of our doctors and our parsons, even our attorneys, our tax-gatherers, and certainly our butlers and our coachmen, Mr. Turveydrop, the great professor of deportment, has done much. But there should always be the art

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to underlie and protect the art;—the art that can hide the art. The really clever archbishop,—the really potent chief-justice, the man who, as a politician, will succeed in becoming a king of men, should know how to carry his buckram without showing it. It was in this that Sir Timothy perhaps failed a little. There are men who look as though they were born to wear blue ribbons. It has come probably from study, but it seems to be natural. Sir Timothy did not impose on those who looked at him as do these men. You could see a little of the paint, you could hear the crumple of the starch and the padding; you could trace something of uneasiness in the would-be composed grandeur of the brow. "Turveydrop!" the spectator would say to himself. But after all it may be a question whether a man be open to reproach for not doing that well which the greatest among us,—if we could find one great enough,—would not do at all.

For I think we must hold that true personal dignity should be achieved,—must, if it be quite true, have been achieved,—without any personal effort. Though it be evinced, in part, by the carriage of the body, that carriage should be the fruit of the operation of the mind. Even when it be assisted by external garniture such as special clothes and wigs and ornaments, such garniture should have been prescribed by the sovereign or by custom, and should not have been selected by the wearer. In regard to speech a man may study all that which may make him suasive, but if he go beyond that he will trench on those histrionic efforts which he will know to be wrong because he will be ashamed to acknowledge them. It is good to be beautiful, but it should come of God and not of the hairdresser. And

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personal dignity is a great possession; but a man should struggle for it no more than he would for beauty. Many, however, do struggle for it, and with such success that, though they do not achieve quite the real thing, still they get something on which they can bolster themselves up and be mighty.

Others, older men than Silverbridge, saw as much as did our young friends, but they were more complaisant and more reasonable. They, too, heard the crackle of the buckram, and were aware that the last touch of awe had come upon that brow just as its owner was emerging from the shadow of the Speaker's chair;—but to them it was a thing of course. A real Cæsar is not to be found every day, nor can we always have a Pitt to control our debates. That kind of thing, that last touch has its effect. Of course it is all paint,—but how would the poor girl look before the gas-lights if there were no paint? The House of Commons likes a little deportment on occasions. If a special man looks bigger than you, you can console yourself by reflecting that he also looks bigger than your fellows. Sir Timothy probably knew what he was about, and did himself on the whole more good than harm by his little tricks.

As soon as Sir Timothy had taken his seat, Mr. Rattler got up from the opposition bench to ask him some question on a matter of finance. The brewers were anxious about publican licenses. Could the Chancellor of the Exchequer say a word on the matter. Notice had of course been given, and the questioner had stated a quarter of an hour previously, that he would postpone his query till the Chancellor of the Exchequer was in the House.

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Sir Timothy rose from his seat, and in his blandest manner began by apologising for his late appearance. He was sorry that he had been prevented by public business from being in his place to answer the honourable gentleman's question in its proper turn. And even now, he feared, that he must decline to give any answer which could be supposed to be satisfactory. It would probably be his duty to make a statement to the House on the following day,—a statement which he was not quite prepared to make at the present moment. But in the existing state of things he was unwilling to make any reply to any question by which he might seem to bind the Government to any opinion. Then he sat down. And rising again not long afterwards, when the House had gone through certain formal duties, he moved that it should be adjourned till the next day. Then all the members trooped out, and with the others Tregear and Lord Silverbridge. "So that is the end of your first day of Parliament," said Silverbridge.

"What does it all mean?"

"Let us go to the Carlton and hear what the fellows are saying."

On that evening both the young men dined at Mr. Boncassen's house. Though Tregear had been cautioned not to write to Lady Mary, and though he was not to see her before Easter, still it was so completely understood that he was about to become her husband, that he was entertained in that capacity by all those who were concerned in the family. "And so they will all go out," said Mr. Boncassen.

"That seems to be the general idea," said the expectant son-in-law. "When two men want to be first and neither will give way, they can't very well get on

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in the same boat together." Then he expatiated angrily on the treachery of Sir Timothy, and Tregear in a more moderate way joined in the same opinion.

"Upon my word, young men, I doubt whether you are right," said Mr. Boncassen. "Whether it can be possible that a man should have risen to such a position with so little patriotism as you attribute to our friend, I will not pretend to say. I should think that in England it was impossible. But of this I am sure, that the faculty which exists here for a Minister or Ministers to go out of office without disturbance of the Crown is a great blessing. You say the other party will come in."

"That is most probable," said Silverbridge.

"With us the other party never comes in,—never has a chance of coming in,—except once in four years, when the President is elected. That one event binds us all for four years."

"But you do change your Ministers," said Tregear.

"A secretary may quarrel with the President, or he may have the gout, or be convicted of peculation."

"And yet you think yourselves more nearly free than we are."

"I am not so sure of that. We have had a pretty difficult task, that of carrying on a government in a new country, which is nevertheless more populous than almost any old country. The influxions are so rapid, that every ten years the nature of the people is changed. It is n't easy; and though I think on the whole we 've done pretty well, I am not going to boast that Washington is as yet the seat of a political paradise."

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CHAPTER XXIV.

"MABEL, GOOD-BYE."

When Tregear first came to town with his arm in a sling, and bandages all round him,—in order that he might be formally accepted by the Duke,—he had himself taken to one other house besides the house in Carlton Terrace. He went to Belgrave Square, to announce his fate to Lady Mabel Grex;—but Lady Mabel Grex was not there. The Earl was ill at Brighton, and Lady Mabel had gone down to nurse him. The old woman who came to him in the hall told him that the Earl was very ill;—he had been attacked by the gout, but in spite of the gout, and in spite of the doctors, he had insisted on being taken to his club. Then he had been removed to Brighton, under the doctor's advice, chiefly in order that he might be kept out of the way of temptation. Now he was supposed to be very ill indeed. "My lord is so imprudent!" said the old woman, shaking her old head in real unhappiness. For though the Earl had been a tyrant to every one near him, yet when a poor woman becomes old it is something to have a tyrant to protect her. "My lord" always had been imprudent. Tregear knew that it had been the theory of my lord's life that to eat and drink and die was better than to abstain and live. Then Tregear wrote to his friend as follows:—

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"My dear Mabel,—I am up in town again, as you will perceive, although I am still in a helpless condition and hardly able to write even this letter. I called to-day and was very sorry to hear so bad an account of your father. Had I been able to travel I should have come down to you. When I am able I will do so if you would wish to see me. In the meantime, pray tell me how he is and how you are.

"My news is this. The Duke has accepted me. It is great news to me, and I hope will be acceptable to you. I do believe that if ever a friend has been anxious for a friend's welfare you have been anxious for mine,—as I have been and ever shall be for yours.

"Of course this thing will be very much to me. I will not speak now of my love for the girl who is to become my wife. You might again call me Romeo. Nor do I like to say much of what may now be pecuniary prospects. I did not ask Mary to become my wife because I supposed she would be rich. But I could not have married her or any one else who had not money. What are the Duke's intentions I have not the slightest idea, nor shall I ask him. I am to go down to Matching at Easter, and shall endeavour to have some time fixed. I suppose the Duke will say something about money. If he does not, I shall not.

"Pray write to me at once, and tell me when I shall see you.

"Your affectionate cousin,

"F. O. TREGEAR."

In answer to this there came a note in a very few words. She congratulated him,—not very warmly,—but expressed a hope that she might see him soon

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But she told him not to come to Brighton. The Earl was better but very cross, and she would be up in town before long.

Towards the end of the month it became suddenly known in London that Lord Grex had died at Brighton. There was a Garter to be given away and everybody was filled with regret that such an ornament to the peerage should have departed from them. The conservative papers remembered how excellent a politician he had been in his younger days, and the world was informed that the family of Grex of Grex was about the oldest in Great Britain of which authentic records were in existence. Then there came another note from Lady Mabel to Tregear. "I shall be in town on the 31st in the old house, with Miss Cassewary, and will see you if you can come on the 1st. Come early, at eleven, if you can."

On the day named and at the hour fixed he was in Belgrave Square. He had known this house since he was a boy, and could well remember how, when he first entered it, he had thought with some awe of the grandeur of the Earl. The Earl had then not paid much attention to him, but he had become very much taken by the grace and good nature of the girl who had owned him as a cousin. "You are my cousin Frank," she had said; "I am so glad to have a cousin." He could remember the words now as though they had been spoken only yesterday. Then there had quickly grown to be friendship between him and this, as he thought, sweetest of all girls. At that time he had just gone to Eton; but before he left Eton they had sworn to love each other. And so it had been and the thing had grown, till at last, just when he had

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taken his degree two matters had been settled between them; the first was that each loved the other irretrievably, irrevocably, passionately; the second, that it was altogether out of the question that they should ever marry each other.

It is but fair to Tregear to say that this last decision originated with the lady. He had told her that he certainly would hold himself engaged to marry her at some future time; but she had thrown this aside at once. How was it possible, she said, that two such beings, brought up in luxury. and taught to enjoy all the good things of the world, should expect to live and be happy together without an income? He offered to go to the Bar;—but she asked him whether he thought it well that such a one as she should wait say a dozen years for such a process. "When the time comes, I should be an old woman and you would be a wretched man." She released him,—declared her own purpose of marrying well; and then, though there had been a moment in which her own assurance of her own love had been passionate enough, she went so far as to tell him that she was heart-whole. "We have been two foolish children, but we cannot be children any longer," she said. "There must be an end of it."

What had hitherto been the result of this the reader knows,—and Tregear knew also. He had taken the privilege given to him, and had made so complete a use of it that he had in truth transferred his heart as well as his allegiance. Where is the young man who cannot do so;—how few are there who do not do so when their first fit of passion has come on them at one-and-twenty? And he had thought that she would

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do the same. But gradually he found that she had not done so, did not do so, could not do so! When she first heard of Lady Mary she had not reprimanded him,—but she could not keep herself from showing the bitterness of her disappointment. Though she would still boast of her own strength and of her own purpose, yet it was too clear to him that she was wounded and very sore. She would have liked him to remain single at any rate till she herself were married. But the permission had been hardly given before he availed himself of it. And then he talked to her not only of the brilliancy of his prospects,—which she could have forgiven,—but of his love—his love!

Then she had refused one offer after another, and he had known it all. There was nothing in which she was concerned that she did not tell him. Then young Silverbridge had come across her, and she had determined that he should be her husband. She had been nearly successful,—so nearly that at moments she had felt sure of success. But the prize had slipped from her through her own fault. She knew well enough that it was her own fault. When a girl submits to play such a game as that, she should not stand on too nice scruples. She had told herself this many a time since;—but the prize was gone.

All this Tregear knew, and knowing it almost dreaded the coming interview. He could not without actual cruelty have avoided her. Had he done so before he could not have continued to do so now, when she was left alone in the world. Her father had not been much to her, but still his presence had enabled her to put herself before the world as being somebody. Now she

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would be almost nobody. And she had lost her rich prize, while he,—out of the same treasury, as it were, —had won his!

The door was opened to him by the same old woman, and he was shown, at a funereal pace, up into the drawing-room which he had known so well. He was told that Lady Mabel would be down to him directly. As he looked about him he could see that already had been commenced that work of division of spoil which is sure to follow the death of most of us. Things were already gone which used to be familiar to his eyes, and the room, though not dismantled, had been deprived of its little prettinesses and was ugly.

In about ten minutes she came down to him,—with so soft a step that he would not have been aware of her entrance had he not seen her form in the mirror. Then, when he turned round to greet her, he was astonished by the blackness of her appearance. She looked as though she had become ten years older since he had last seen her. As she came up to him she was grave and almost solemn in her gait, but there was no sign of any tears. Why should there have been a tear? Women weep, and men too, not from grief but from emotion. Indeed, grave and slow as was her step, and serious, almost solemn, as was her gait, there was something of a smile on her mouth as she gave him her hand. And yet her face was very sad, declaring to him too plainly something of the hopelessness of her heart. "And so the Duke has consented," she said. He had told her that in his letter, but, since that, her father had died and she had been left, he did not as yet know how far impoverished, but he feared with no pleasant worldly prospects before her.

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"Yes, Mabel;—that, I suppose, will be settled. I have been so shocked to hear all this."

"It has been very sad;—has it not? Sit down, Frank. You and I have a good deal to say to each other now that we have met. It was no good your going down to Brighton. He would not have seen you, and at last I never left him."

"Was Percival there?" She only shook her head. "That was dreadful."

"It was not Percival's fault. He would not see him; nor till the last hour or two would he believe in his own danger. Nor was he ever frightened for a moment,—not even then."

"Was he good to you?"

"Good to me! Well;—he liked my being there. Poor papa! It had gone so far with him that he could not be good to any one. I think that he felt that it would be unmanly not to be the same to the end."

"He would not see Percival?"

"When it was suggested he would only ask what good Percival could do him. I did send for him at last, in my terror, but he did not see his father alive. When he did come he only told me how badly his father had treated him! It was very dreadful!"

"I did so feel for you."

"I am sure you did, and will. After all, Frank, I think that the pious godly people have the best of it in this world. Let them be ever so covetous, ever so false, ever so hard-hearted, the mere fact that they must keep up appearances, makes them comfortable to those around them. Poor papa was not comfortable to me. A little hypocrisy, a little sacrifice to the feelings of the world, may be such a blessing."

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"I am sorry that you should feel it so."

"Yes; it is sad. But you;—everything is smiling with you! Let us talk about your plans."

"Another time will do for that. I had come to hear about your own affairs."

"There they are," she said, pointing round the room. "I have no other affairs. You see that I am going from here."

"And where are you going?" She shook her head. "With whom will you live?"

"With Miss Cass,—two old maids together! I know nothing further."

"But about money? That is, if I am justified in asking."

"What would you not be justified in asking? Do you not know that I would tell you every secret of my heart,—if my heart had a secret. It seems that I have given up what was to have been my fortune. There was a claim of £12,000 on Grex. But I have abandoned it."

"And there is nothing."

"There will be scrapings, they tell me,—unless Percival refuses to agree. This house is mortgaged,—but not for its value. And there are some jewels. But all that is detestable,—a mere grovelling among mean hundreds; whereas you,—you will soar among——"

"Oh, Mabel! do not say hard things to me."

"No, indeed! why should I,—I who have been preaching that comfortable doctrine of hypocrisy? I will say nothing hard. But I would sooner talk of your good things than of my evil ones."

"I would not."

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"Then you must talk about them for my sake. How was it that the Duke came round at last?"

"I hardly know. She sent for me."

"A fine high-spirited girl. These Pallisers have more courage about them than one expects from their outward manner. Silverbridge has plenty of it."

"I remember telling you he could be obstinate."

"And I remember that I did not believe you. Now I know it. He has that sort of pluck which enables a man to break a girl's heart,—or to destroy a girl's hopes,—without wincing. He can tell a girl to her face that she may go to the——mischief for him. There are so many men who can't do that, from cowardice, though their hearts be ever so well inclined. 'I have changed my mind.' There is something great in the courage of a man who can say that to a woman in so many words. Most of them, when they escape, escape by lies and subterfuges. Or they run away and won't allow themselves to be heard of. They trust to a chapter of accidents, and leave things to arrange themselves. But when a man can look a girl in the face with those seemingly soft eyes, and say with that seemingly soft mouth,—'I have changed my mind,'—though she would look him dead in return if she could, still she must admire him."

"Are you speaking of Silverbridge now?"

"Of course I am speaking of Silverbridge. I suppose I ought to hide it all and not tell you. But as you are the only person I do tell, you must put up with me. Yes;—when I taxed him with his falsehood,—for he had been false,—he answered me with those very words! 'I have changed my mind.' He could

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not lie. To speak the truth was a necessity to him, even at the expense of his gallantry, almost of his humanity."

"Has he been false to you, Mabel?"

"Of course he has. But there is nothing to quarrel about if you mean that. People do not quarrel now about such things. A girl has to fight her own battle with her own pluck and her own wits. As with these weapons she is generally stronger than her enemy, she succeeds sometimes although everything else is against her. I think I am courageous, but his courage beat mine. I craned at the first fence. When he was willing to swallow my bait, my hand was not firm enough to strike the hook in his jaws. Had I not quailed then I think I should have—'had him.'"

"It is horrid to hear you talk like this." She was leaning over from her seat, looking, black as she was, so much older than her wont, with something about her of that unworldly serious thoughtfulness which a mourning garb always gives. And yet her words were so worldly, so unfeminine!

"I have got to tell the truth to somebody. It was so, just as I have said. Of course I did not love him. How could I love him after what has passed? But there need have been nothing much in that. I don't suppose that dukes' eldest sons often get married for love."

"Miss Boncassen loves him."

"I dare say the beggar's daughter loved King Cophetua. When you come to distances such as that, there can be love. The very fact that a man should have descended so far in quest of beauty,—the flattery of it alone,—will produce love. When the angels came

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after the daughters of men of course the daughters of men loved them. The distance between him and me is not great enough to have produced that sort of worship. There was no reason why Lady Mabel Grex should not be good enough wife for the son of the Duke of Omnium."

"Certainly not."

"And therefore I was not struck as by the shining of a light from heaven. I cannot say I loved him. Frank,—I am beyond worshipping even an angel from heaven!"

"Then I do not know that you could blame him," he said very seriously.

"Just so;—and as I have chosen to be honest I have told him everything. But I had my revenge first."

"I would have said nothing."

"You would have recommended—delicacy! No doubt you think that women should be delicate let them suffer what they may. A woman should not let it be known that she has any human nature in her. I had him on the hip, and for a moment I used my power. He had certainly done me a wrong. He had asked for my love,—and with the delicacy which you commend, I had not at once grasped at all that such a request conveyed. Then, as he told me so frankly, he 'changed his mind!' Did he not wrong me?"

"He should not have raised false hopes."

"He told me that—he had changed his mind. I think I loved him then as nearly as ever I did,—because he looked me full in the face. Then,—I told him I had never cared for him, and that he need have nothing on his conscience. But I doubt whether he was

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glad to hear it. Men are so vain! I have talked too much of myself. And so you are to be the Duke's son-in-law. And she will have hundreds of thousands."

"Thousands perhaps, but I do not think very much about it. I feel that he will provide for her."

"And that you, having secured her, can creep under his wing like an additional ducal chick. It is very comfortable. The Duke will be quite a providence to you. I wonder that all young gentlemen do not marry heiresses;—it is so easy. And you have got your seat in Parliament too! Oh, your luck! When I look back upon it all it seems so hard to me! It was for you,—for you that I used to be anxious. Now it is I who have not an inch of ground to stand upon." Then he approached her and put out his hand to her. "No," she said, putting both her hands behind her back, "for God's sake let there be no tenderness. But is it not cruel? Think of my advantages at that moment when you and I agreed that our paths should be separate. My fortune then had not been made quite shipwreck by my father and brother. I had before me all that society could offer. I was called handsome and clever. Where was there a girl more likely to make her way to the top?"

"You may do so still."

"No;—no;—I cannot. And you at least should not tell me so. I did not know then the virulence of the malady which had fallen on me. I did not know then that, because of you, other men would be abhorrent to me. I thought that I was as easy-hearted as you have proved yourself."

"How cruel you can be."

"Have I done anything to interfere with you? Have

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I said a word even to that young lad, when I might have said a word. Yes; to him I did say something; but I waited, and would not say it, while a word could hurt you. Shall I tell you what I told him? Just everything that has ever happened between you and me."

"You did?"

"Yes;—because I saw that I could trust him. I told him because I wanted him to be quite sure that I had never loved him. But, Frank, I have put no spoke in your wheel. There has not been a moment since you told me of your love for this rich young lady in which I would not have helped you had help been in my power. Whomever I may have harmed, I have never harmed you."

"Am I not as clear from blame towards you?"

"No, Frank. You have done me the terrible evil of ceasing to love me."

"It was at your own bidding."

"Certainly! But if I were to bid you to cut my throat, would you do it?"

"Was it not you who decided that we could not wait for each other?"

"And should it not have been for you to decide that you would wait?"

"You also would have married."

"It almost angers me that you should not see the difference. A girl unless she marries becomes nothing, as I have become nothing now. A man does not want a pillar on which to lean. A man, when he has done as you had done with me, and made a girl's heart all his own, even though his own heart had been flexible and plastic as yours is, should have been true to her,

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at least for a while. Did it never occur to you that you owed something to me?"

"I have always owed you very much."

"There should have been some touch of chivalry if not of love to make you feel that a second passion should have been postponed for a year or two. You could wait without growing old. You might have allowed yourself a little space to dwell—I was going to say on the sweetness of your memories. But they were not sweet, Frank; they were not sweet to you."

"These rebukes, Mabel, will rob them of their sweetness,—for a time."

"It is gone; all gone," she said, shaking her head, —"gone from me because I have been so easily deserted; gone from you because the change has been so easy to you. How long was it, Frank, after you had left me before you were basking happily in the smiles of Lady Mary Palliser?"

"It was not very long,—as months go."

"Say days, Frank."

"I have to defend myself, and I will do so with truth. It was not very long,—as months go; but why should it have been less long, whether for months or days? I had to cure myself of a wound."

"To put a plaster on a scratch, Frank."

"And the sooner a man can do that the more manly he is. Is it a sign of strength to wail under a sorrow that cannot be cured,—or of truth to perpetuate the appearance of a woe?"

"Has it been an appearance with me?"

"I am speaking of myself now. I am driven to speak of myself by the bitterness of your words. It was you who decided."

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" You accepted my decision easily."

" Because it was based not only on my unfitness for such a marriage, but on yours. When I saw that there would be perhaps some years of misery for you, of course I accepted your decision. The sweetness had been very sweet to me."

" Oh, Frank, was it ever sweet to you? "

" And the triumph of it had been very great. I had been assured of the love of her who among all the high ones of the world seemed to me to be the highest. Then came your decision. Do you really believe that I could abandon the sweetness, that I could be robbed of my triumph, that I could think I could never again be allowed to put my arm round your waist, never again to feel your cheek close to mine, that I should lose all that had seemed left to me among the gods, without feeling it? "

" Frank, Frank," she said, rising to her feet, and stretching out her hands as though she were going to give him back all these joys.

" Of course I felt it. I did not then know what was before me." When he said this she sank back immediately upon her seat. " I was wretched enough. I had lost a limb and could not walk; my eyes, and must always hereafter be blind; my fitness to be among men, and must always hereafter be secluded. It is so that a man is stricken down when some terrible trouble comes upon him. But it is given to him to retrick his beams."

" You have retricked yours."

" Yes;—and the strong man will show his strength by doing it quickly. Mabel, I sorrowed for myself greatly when that word was spoken, partly because I

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thought that your love could so easily be taken from me. And, since I have found that it has not been so, I have sorrowed for you also. But I do not blame myself, and—and I will not submit to have blame even from you." She stared him in the face as he said this. "A man should never submit to blame."

"But if he has deserved it."

"Who is to be the judge? But why should we contest this. You do not really wish to trample on me."

"No;—not that."

"Nor to disgrace me; nor to make me feel myself disgraced in my own judgment?" Then there was a pause for some moments as though he had left her without another word to say. "Shall I go now?" he asked.

"Oh, Frank!"

"I fear that my presence only makes you unhappy."

"Then what will your absence do? When shall I see you again? But, no; I will not see you again. Not for many days,—not for years. Why should I? Frank, is it wicked that I should love you?" He could only shake his head in answer to this. "If it be so wicked that I must be punished for it eternally still I love you. I can never, never, never love another. You cannot understand it. Oh God,—that I had never understood it myself! I think, I think, that I would go with you now anywhere, facing all misery, all judgments, all disgrace. You know, do you not, that if it were possible, I should not say so. But as I know that you would not stir a step with me, I do say so."

"I know it is not meant."

"It is meant, though it could not be done. Frank, I must not see her, not for a while; not for years. I

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do not wish to hate her, but how can I help it? Do you remember when she flew into your arms in this room? "

" I remember it."

" Of course you do. It is your great joy now to remember that, and such like. She must be very good! Though I hate her!"

" Do not say that you hate her, Mabel."

" Though I hate her she must be good. It was a fine and a brave thing to do. I have done it; but never before the world like that; have I, Frank? Oh, Frank, I shall never do it again. Go now, and do not touch me. Let us both pray that in ten years we may meet as passionless friends." He came to her hardly knowing what he meant, but purposing, as though by instinct, to take her hand as he parted from her. But she, putting both her hands before her face, and throwing herself on to the sofa, buried her head among the cushions.

" Is there not to be another word? " he said. Lying as she did, she still was able to make a movement of dissent and he left her, muttering just one word between his teeth, " Mabel, good-bye."

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CHAPTER XXV.

THE DUKE RETURNS TO OFFICE.

THAT farewell took place on the Friday morning. Tregear as he walked out of the square knew now that he had been the cause of a great shipwreck. At first when that passionate love had been declared,—he could hardly remember whether with the fullest passion by him or by her,—he had been as a god walking upon air. That she who seemed to be so much above him should have owned that she was all his own seemed then to be world enough for him. For a few weeks he lived a hero to himself, and was able to tell himself that for him the glory of a passion was sufficient. In those halcyon moments no common human care is allowed to intrude itself. To one who has thus entered in upon the heroism of romance his own daily work, his dinners, clothes, income, father and mother, sisters and brothers, his own street and house are nothing. Hunting, shooting, rowing, Alpine-climbing, even speeches in Parliament,—if they perchance have been attained to,—all become leather or prunella. The heavens have been opened to him, and he walks among them like a god. So it had been with Tregear. Then had come the second phase of his passion,—which is also not uncommon to young men who soar high in their first assaults. He was told that it would not do; and was not so told by a hard-hearted parent, but by the young lady herself. And she had spoken

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so reasonably that he had yielded, and had walked away with that sudden feeling of a vile return to his own mean belongings, to his lodgings and his income, which not a few ambitious young men have experienced. But she had convinced him. Then had come the journey to Italy, and the reader knows all the rest. He certainly had not derogated in transferring his affections,—but it may be doubted whether in this second love he had walked among the stars as in the first. A man can hardly mount twice among the stars. But he had been as eager,—and as true. And he had succeeded, without any flaw on his conscience. It had been agreed, when that first disruption took place, that he and Mabel should be friends; and, as to a friend, he had told her of his hopes. When first she had mingled something of sarcasm with her congratulations, though it had annoyed him, it had hardly made him unhappy. When she called him Romeo and spoke of herself as Rosaline, he took her remark as indicating some petulance rather than an enduring love. That had been womanly and he could forgive it. He had his other great and solid happiness to support him. Then he had believed that she would soon marry, if not Silverbridge, then some other fitting young nobleman, and that all would be well. But now things were very far from well. The storm which was now howling round her afflicted him much.

Perhaps the bitterest feeling of all was that her love should have been so much stronger, so much more enduring than his own. He could not but remember how in his first agony he had blamed her because she had declared that they should be severed. He had then told himself that such severing would be to him

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impossible, and that had her nature been as high as his, it would have been as impossible to her. Which nature must he now regard as the higher? She had done her best to rid herself of the load of her passion, and had failed. But he had freed himself with convenient haste. All that he had said as to the manliness of conquering grief had been wise enough. But still he could not quit himself of some feeling of disgrace in that he had changed and she had not. He tried to comfort himself with reflecting that Mary was all his own,—that in that matter he had been victorious and happy;—but for an hour or two he thought more of Mabel than of Mary.

When the time came in which he could employ himself he called for Silverbridge, and they walked together across the park to Westminster. Silverbridge was gay and full of eagerness as to the coming ministerial statement, but Tregear could not turn his mind from the work of the morning. "I don't seem to care very much about it," he said at last.

"I do care very much," said Silverbridge.

"What difference will it make?"

"I breakfasted with the governor this morning, and I have not seen him in such good spirits since,—well, for a long time." The date to which Silverbridge would have referred, had he not checked himself, was that of the evening on which it had been agreed between him and his father that Mabel Grex should be promoted to the seat of highest honour in the house of Palliser,—but that was a matter which must henceforward be buried in silence. "He did not say as much, but I feel perfectly sure that he and Mr. Monk have arranged a new government."

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"I don't see any matter for joy in that to conservatives like you and me."

"He is my father,—and as he is going to be your father-in-law I should have thought that you might have been pleased."

"Oh yes;—if he likes it. But I have heard so often of the crushing cares of office, and I had thought that of all living men he had been the most crushed by them."

All that had to be done in the House of Commons on that afternoon was finished before five o'clock. By half-past five the House, and all the purlieus of the House, were deserted. And yet at four, immediately after prayers, there had been such a crowd that members had been unable to find seats! Tregear and Silverbridge having been early had succeeded, but those who had been less careful were obliged to listen as best they could in the galleries. The stretching out of necks and the holding of hands behind the ears did not last long. Sir Timothy had not had much to say, but what he did say was spoken with a dignity which seemed to anticipate future exaltation rather than present downfall. There had arisen a question in regard to revenue,—he need hardly tell them that it was that question in reference to brewers' licenses to which the honourable gentleman opposite had alluded on the previous day,—as to which unfortunately he was not in accord with his noble friend the Prime Minister. Under the circumstances it was hardly possible that they should at once proceed to business, and he therefore moved that the House should stand adjourned till Tuesday next. That was the whole statement.

Not very long afterwards the Prime Minister made another statement in the House of Lords. As the

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the Chancellor of the Exchequer had very suddenly resigned and had thereby broken up the ministry, he had found himself compelled to place his resignation in the hands of her Majesty. Then that House was also adjourned. On that afternoon all the clubs were alive with admiration at the great cleverness displayed by Sir Timothy in this transaction. It was not only that he had succeeded in breaking up the ministry, and that he had done this without incurring violent disgrace; but he had so done it as to throw all the reproach upon his late unfortunate colleague. It was thus that Mr. Lupton explained it. Sir Timothy had been at the pains to ascertain on what matters connected with the revenue Lord Drummond,—or Lord Drummond's closest advisers,—had opinions of their own, opinions strong enough not to be abandoned; and having discovered that, he also discovered arguments on which to found an exactly contrary opinion. But as the revenue had been intrusted specially to his unworthy hands, he was entitled to his own opinion on this matter. "The majority of the House," said Mr. Lupton, "and the entire public, will no doubt give him credit for great self-abnegation."

All this happened on the Friday. During the Saturday it was considered probable that the Cabinet would come to terms with itself, and that internal wounds would be healed. The general opinion was that Lord Drummond would give way. But on the Sunday morning it was understood that Lord Drummond would not yield. It was reported that Lord Drummond was willing to purchase his separation from Sir Timothy even at the expense of his office. That Sir Timothy should give way seemed to be impossible. Had he

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done so it would have been impossible for him to recover the respect of the House. Then it was rumoured that two or three others had gone with Sir Timothy. And on Monday morning it was proclaimed that the Prime Minister was not in a condition to withdraw his resignation. On the Tuesday the House met and Mr. Monk announced, still from the opposition benches, that he had that morning been with the Queen. Then there was another adjournment, and all the liberals knew that the gates of Paradise were again about to be opened to them.

This is only interesting to us as affecting the happiness and character of our Duke. He had consented to assist Mr. Monk in forming a government, and to take office under Mr. Monk's leadership. He had had many contests with himself before he could bring himself to this submission. He knew that if anything could once again make him contented, it would be work; he knew that if he could serve his country it was his duty to serve it; and he knew also that it was only by the adhesion of such men as himself that the traditions of his party could be maintained. But he had been Prime Minister,—and he was sure he could never be Prime Minister again. There are in all matters certain little, almost hidden, signs by which we can measure within our own bosoms the extent of our successes and our failures. Our Duke's friends had told him that his ministry had been serviceable to the country; but no one had ever suggested to him that he would again be asked to fill the place which he had filled. He had stopped a gap. He would beforehand have declared himself willing to serve his country even in this way; but having done so,—having done that

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and no more than that,—he felt that he had failed. He had in his soreness declared to himself that he would never more take office. He had much to do to overcome this promise to himself;—but when he had brought himself to submit he was certainly a happier man.

There was no going to see the Queen. That on the present occasion was done simply by Mr. Monk. But on the Wednesday morning his name appeared in the list of the new Cabinet as President of the Council. He was perhaps a little fidgety, a little too anxious to employ himself and to be employed, a little too desirous of immediate work;—but still he was happy and gracious to those around him. "I suppose you like that particular office," Silverbridge said to him.

"Well; yes;—not best of all, you know," and he smiled as he made this admission.

"You mean Prime Minister."

"No, indeed I don't. I am inclined to think that the Premier should always sit in your House. No, Silverbridge, if I could have my way,—which is of course impossible, for I cannot put off my honours,—I would return to my old place. I would return to the Exchequer where the work is hard and certain, where a man can do, or at any rate attempt to do, some special thing. A man there if he stick to that and does not travel beyond it, need not be popular, need not be a partisan, need not be eloquent, need not be a courtier. He should understand his profession, as should a lawyer or a doctor. If he does that thoroughly he can serve his country without recourse to that parliamentary strategy for which I know that I am unfit."

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"You can't do that in the House of Lords, sir."

"No; no. I wish the title could have passed over my head, Silverbridge, and gone to you at once. I think we both should have been suited better. But there are things which one should not consider. Even in this place I may perhaps do something. Shall you attack us very bitterly?"

"I am the only man who does not mean to make any change."

"How so?"

"I shall stay where I am,—on the Government side of the House."

"Are you clear about that, my boy?"

"Quite clear."

"Such changes should not be made without very much consideration."

"I have already written to them at Silverbridge and have had three or four answers. Mr. Du Boung says that the borough is more than grateful. Mr. Sprout regrets it much, and suggests a few months' consideration. Mr. Sprugeon seems to think it does not signify."

"That is hardly complimentary."

"No,—not to me. But he is very civil to the family. As long as a Palliser represents the borough, Mr. Sprugeon thinks that it does not matter much on which side he may sit. I have had my little vagary, and I don't think that I shall change again."

"I suppose it is your republican bride elect that has done that," said the Duke, laughing.

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CHAPTER XXVI.

THE FIRST WEDDING.

As Easter Sunday fell on the 17th April, and as the arrangement of the new Cabinet, with its inferior offices, was not completed till the 6th of that month, there was only just time for the new elections before the holidays. Mr. Monk sat on his bench so comfortably that he hardly seemed ever to have been off it. And Phineas Finn resumed the peculiar ministerial tone of voice just as though he had never allowed himself to use the free and indignant strains of opposition. As to a majority,—nothing as yet was known about that. Some few besides Silverbridge might probably transfer themselves to the Government. None of the Ministers lost their seats at the new elections. The opposite party seemed for a while to have been paralysed by the defection of Sir Timothy, and men who liked a quiet life were able to comfort themselves with the reflection that nothing could be done this session.

For our lovers this was convenient. Neither of them would have allowed their parliamentary energies to have interfered at such a crisis with his domestic affairs; but still it was well to have time at command. The day for the marriage of Isabel and Silverbridge had been now fixed. That was to take place on the Wednesday after Easter, and was to be celebrated by special royal favour in the chapel at Whitehall. All

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the Pallisers would be there, and all the relations of all the Pallisers, all the ambassadors, and of course all the Americans in London. It would be a "wretched grind," as Silverbridge said, but it had to be done. In the meantime the whole party, including the new President of the Council, were down at Matching. Even Isabel, though it must be presumed that she had much to do in looking after her bridal garments, was able to be there for a day or two. But Tregear was the person to whom this visit was of the greatest importance.

He had been allowed to see Lady Mary in London, but hardly to do more than see her. With her he had been alone for about five minutes, and then cruel circumstances,—circumstances, however, which were not permanently cruel,—had separated them. All their great difficulties had been settled, and no doubt they were happy. Tregear, though he had been as it were received into grace by that glass of wine, still had not entered into the intimacies of the house. This he felt himself. He had been told that he had better restrain himself from writing to Mary, and he had restrained himself. He had therefore no immediate opportunity of creeping into that perfect intimacy with the house and household which is generally accorded to a promised son-in-law.

On this occasion he travelled down alone, and as he approached the house he, who was not by nature timid, felt himself to be somewhat cowed. That the Duke should not be cold to him was almost impossible. Of course he was there in opposition to the Duke's wishes. Even Silverbridge had never quite liked the match. Of course he was to have all that he desired. Of course he was the most fortunate of men. Of course

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no man had ever stronger reason to be contented with the girl he loved. But still his heart was a little low as he was driven up to the door.

The first person whom he saw was the Duke himself, who, as the fly from the station arrived, was returning from his walk. "You are welcome to Matching," he said, taking off his hat with something of ceremony. This was said before the servants, but Tregear was then led into the study and the door was closed. "I never do anything by halves, Mr. Tregear," he said. "Since it is to be so you shall be the same to me as though you had come under other auspices. Of yourself personally I hear all that is good. Consider yourself at home here, and in all things use me as your friend." Tregear endeavoured to make some reply, but could not find words that were fitting. "I think that the young people are out," continued the Duke. "Mr. Warburton will help you to find them if you like to go upon the search." The words had been very gracious, but still there was something in the manner of the man which made Tregear find it almost impossible to regard him as he might have regarded another father-in-law. He had often heard the Duke spoken of as a man who could become awful if he pleased, almost without an effort. He had been told of the man's mingled simplicity, courtesy, and self-assertion, against which no impudence or raillery could prevail. And now he seemed to understand it.

He was not driven to go under the private secretary's escort in quest of the young people. Mary had understood her business much better than that. "If you please, sir, Lady Mary is in the little drawing-room," said a well-arrayed young girl to him as soon

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as the Duke's door was closed. This was Lady Mary's own maid, who had been on the lookout for the fly. Lady Mary had known all details as to the arrival of the trains and the length of the journey from the station, and had not been walking with the other young people when the Duke had intercepted her lover. Even that delay she had thought was hard. The discreet maid opened the door of the little drawing-room, —and discreetly closed it instantly. "At last!" she said, throwing herself into his arms.

"Yes,—at last."

On this occasion time did not envy them. The long afternoons of spring had come, and as Tregear had reached the house between four and five they were able to go out together before the sun set. "No," she said, when he came to inquire as to her life during the last twelve months; "you had not much to be afraid of as to my forgetting."

"But when everything was against me?"

"One thing was not against you. You ought to have been sure of that."

"And so I was. And yet I felt that I ought not to have been sure. Sometimes, in my solitude, I used to think that I myself had been wrong. I began to doubt whether under any circumstances I could have been justified in asking your father's daughter to be my wife."

"Because of his rank?"

"Not so much his rank as his money."

"Ought that to be considered?"

"A poor man who marries a rich woman will always be suspected."

"Because people are so mean and poor-spirited;—

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and because they think that money is more than anything else. It should be nothing at all in such matters. I don't know how it can be anything. They have been saying that to me all along,—as though one were to stop to think whether one were rich or poor." Tregear, when this was said, could not but remember that a time not very much prior to that at which Mary had not stopped to think, neither for a while had he and Mabel. "I suppose it was worse for me than for you," she added.

"I hope not."

"But it was, Frank; and therefore I ought to have it made up to me now. It was very bad to be alone here, particularly when I felt that papa always looked at me as though I were a sinner. He did not mean it, but he could not help looking at me like that. And there was nobody to whom I could say a word."

"It was pretty much the same with me."

"Yes; but you were not offending a father who could not keep himself from looking reproaches at you. I was like a boy at school who had been put into Coventry. And then they sent me to Lady Cantrip!"

"Was that very bad?"

"I do believe that if I were a young woman with a well-ordered mind I should feel myself very much indebted to Lady Cantrip. She had a terrible task of it. But I could not teach myself to like her. I believe she knew all through that I should get my way at last."

"That ought to have made you friends."

"But yet she tried everything she could. And when I told her about that meeting up at Lord Grex's, she was so shocked! Do you remember that?"

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"Do I remember it?"

"Were not you shocked?" This question was not to be answered by any word. "I was," she continued. "It was an awful thing to do; but I was determined to show them all that I was in earnest. Do you remember how Miss Cassewary looked?"

"Miss Cassewary knew all about it."

"I dare say she did. And so, I suppose, did Mabel Grex. I had thought that perhaps I might make Mabel a confidante, but——" Then she looked up into his face.

"But what?"

"You like Mabel, do you not? I do."

"I like her very, very much."

"Perhaps you have liked her too well for that, eh, Frank?"

"Too well for what?"

"That she should have heard all that I had to say about you with sympathy. If so, I am so sorry."

"You need not fear that I have ever for a moment been untrue either to her or you."

"I am sure you have not to me. Poor Mabel! Then they took me to Custins. That was worst of all. I cannot quite tell you what happened there." Of course he asked her,—but, as she had said, she could not quite tell him about Lord Popplecourt.

The next morning the Duke asked his guest in a playful tone what was his Christian name. It could hardly be that he should not have known, but yet he asked the question. "Francis Oliphant," said Tregear. "Those are two Christian names, I suppose, but what do they call you at home?"

"Frank," whispered Mary, who was with them.

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"Then I will call you Frank, if you will allow me. The use of Christian names, I think, is pleasant and hardly common enough among us. I almost forget my own boy's name because the practice has grown up of calling him by a title."

"I am going to call him Abraham," said Isabel.

"Abraham is a good name, only I do not think he got it from his godfathers and godmothers."

"Who can call a man Plantagenet? I should as soon think of calling my father-in-law Cœur de Lion."

"So he is," said Mary. Whereupon the Duke kissed the two girls and went his way,—showing that by this time he had adopted the one and the proposed husband of the other into his heart.

The day before the Duke started for London to be present at the grand marriage he sent for Frank. "I suppose," said he, "that you would wish that some time should be fixed for your own marriage." To this the accepted suitor of course assented. "But before we can do that something must be settled about—money." Tregear when he heard this became hot all over, and felt that he could not restrain his blushes. Such must be the feeling of a man when he finds himself compelled to own to a girl's father that he intends to live upon her money and not upon his own. "I do not like to be troublesome," continued the Duke, "or to ask questions which might seem to be impertinent."

"Oh no! Of course I feel my position. I can only say that it was not because your daughter might probably have money that I first sought her love."

"It shall be so received. And now—— But perhaps it will be best that you should arrange all this with my man of business. Mr. Morton shall be in-

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structed. Mr. Morton lives near my place in Barsetshire, but is now in London. If you will call on him he shall tell you what I would suggest. I hope you will find that your affairs will be comfortable. And now as to the time."

Isabel's wedding was declared by the newspapers to have been one of the most brilliant remembered in the metropolis. There were six bridesmaids, of whom, of course, Mary was one,—and of whom poor Lady Mabel Grex was equally of course not another. Poor Lady Mabel was at this time with Miss Cassewary at Grex, paying what she believed would be a last visit to the old family home. Among the others were two American girls, brought into that august society for the sake of courtesy rather than of personal love. And there were two other Palliser girls and a Scotch M'Cluskie cousin. The breakfast was of course given by Mr. Boncassen at his house in Brook Street, where the bridal presents were displayed. And not only were they displayed; but a list of them, with an approximating statement as to their value, appeared in one or two of the next day's newspapers;—as to which terrible sin against good taste neither was Mr. or Mrs. Boncassen guilty. But in these days, in which such splendid things are done on so very splendid a scale, a young lady cannot herself lay out her friend's gifts so as to be properly seen by her friends. Some well-skilled, well-paid hand is needed even for that, and hence comes this public information on affairs which should surely be private. In our grandmothers' time the happy bride's happy mother herself compounded the cake;—or at any rate the trusted housekeeper. But we all know that terrible tower of silver which

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now stands niddle-noddling with its appendages of flags and spears on the modern wedding breakfast-table. It will come to pass with some of us soon that we must deny ourselves the pleasure of having young friends, because their marriage presents are so costly.

Poor Mrs. Boncassen had not perhaps a happy time with her august guests on that morning; but when she retired to give Isabel her last kiss in privacy she did feel proud to think that her daughter would some day be an English duchess.

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CHAPTER XXVII.

THE SECOND WEDDING.

NOVEMBER is not altogether an hymeneal month, but it was not till November that Lady Mary Palliser became the wife of Frank Tregear. It was postponed a little, perhaps, in order that the Silverbridges,—as they were now called,—might be present. The Silverbridges, who were now quite Darby and Joan, had gone to the States when the session had been brought to a close early in August, and had remained there nearly three months. Isabel had taken infinite pleasure in showing her English husband to her American friends, and the American friends had no doubt taken a pride in seeing so glorious a British husband in the hands of an American wife. Everything was new to Silverbridge, and he was happy in his new possession. She too enjoyed it infinitely, and so it happened that they had been unwilling to curtail their sojourn. But in November they had to return, because Mary had declared that her marriage should be postponed till it could be graced by the presence of her elder brother.

The marriage of Silverbridge had been august. There had been a manifest intention that it should be so. Nobody knew with whom this originated. Mrs. Boncassen had probably been told that it ought to be so, and Mr. Boncassen had been willing to pay the bill. External forces had perhaps operated. The

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Duke had simply been passive and obedient. There had, however, been a general feeling that the bride of the heir of the House of Omnium should be produced to the world amidst a blaze of trumpets and a glare of torches. So it had been. But both the Duke and Mary were determined that this wedding should be different. It was to take place at Matching, and none would be present but they who were staying in the house, or who lived around,—such as tenants and dependents. Four clergymen united their forces to tie Isabel to her husband, one of whom was a bishop, one a canon, and the two others royal chaplains; but there was only to be the vicar of the parish at Matching. And indeed there were no guests in the house except the two bridesmaids and Mr. and Mrs. Finn. As to Mrs. Finn Mary had made a request, and then the Duke had suggested that the husband should be asked to accompany his wife.

It was very pretty. The church itself is pretty, standing in the park, close to the old Priory, not above three hundred yards from the house. And they all walked, taking the broad path through the ruins, going under that figure of Sir Guy which Silverbridge had pointed out to Isabel when they had been whispering there together. The Duke led the way with his girl upon his arm. The two bridesmaids followed. Then Silverbridge and his wife, with Phineas and his wife. Gerald and the bridegroom accompanied them, belonging as it were to the same party! It was very rustic; —almost improper! "This is altogether wrong, you know," said Gerald. "You should appear coming from some other part of the world, as if you were almost unexpected. You ought not to have been in

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the house at all, and certainly should have gone under disguise."

There had been rich presents, too, on this occasion, but they were shown to none except to Mrs. Finn and the bridesmaids,—and perhaps to the favoured servants of the house. At any rate there was nothing said of them in the newspapers. One present there was,—given not to the bride but to the bridegroom,—which he showed to no one except to her. This came to him only on the morning of his marriage, and the envelope containing it bore the postmark of Sedbergh. He knew the handwriting well before he opened the parcel. It contained a small signet-ring with his crest, and with it there were but a few words written on a scrap of paper. "I pray that you may be happy. This was to have been given to you long ago, but I kept it back because of that decision." He showed the ring to Lady Mary and told her it had come from Lady Mabel;—but the scrap of paper no one saw but himself.

Perhaps the matter most remarkable in the wedding was the hilarity of the Duke. One who did not know him well might have said that he was a man with very few cares, and who now took special joy in the happiness of his children,—who was thoroughly contented to see them marry after their own hearts. And yet, as he stood there on the altar steps giving his daughter to that new son and looking first at his girl and then at his married son, he was reminding himself of all he had suffered.

After the breakfast,—which was by no means a grand repast and at which the cake did not look so like an ill-soldered silver castle as that other construc-

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tion had done,—the happy couple were sent away in a modest chariot to the railway station, and not above half-a-dozen slippers were thrown after them. There were enough for luck,—or perhaps there might have been luck even without them, for the wife thoroughly respected her husband, as did the husband his wife. Mrs. Finn, when she was alone with Phineas, said a word or two about Tregear. "When she first told me of her engagement I did not think it possible that she should marry him. But after he had been with me I felt sure that he would succeed."

"Well, sir," said Silverbridge to the Duke when they were out together in the park that afternoon, "what do you think about him?"

"I think he is a manly young man."

"He certainly is that. And then he know things and understands them. It was never a surprise to me that Mary should have been so fond of him."

"I do not know that one ought to be surprised at anything. Perhaps what surprised me most was that he should have looked so high. There seemed to be so little to justify it. But now I will accept that as courage what I before regarded as arrogance."

THE END.

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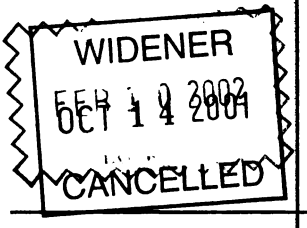

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